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Bangalore Mirror ON SATURDAY

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As shock around Mysuru's balloon tragedy sinks in, experts caution that these party favourites are not as harmless as they look, call for better regulation, safety awareness measures

UP IN THE AIR

Must-haves: Ventilation at venues, trained personnel to handle gas cylinders

| Sridhar.Vivan
@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @sridharVMIRROR

Bengaluru's party scene, especially children's birthday celebrations, has embraced helium gas balloons as a visual highlight. Floating freely above the crowd, these balloons add colour and drama to events, making them an instant favourite among children. But experts warn that behind the fancy appeal lies a serious and often misunderstood risk, especially when the gas cylinders are handled at party venues by untrained persons.

The issue came into focus after a recent fatal incident linked to gas-filled balloons in Mysuru where a person lost life. Experts are drawing attention to how widely such balloons are used in Bengaluru without proper regulation or awareness.

"The scientific principle behind floating balloons is known as buoyancy, governed by Archimedes' principle. A balloon rises when the gas inside it is lighter than the surrounding air. Helium has a lower

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 >>

"The biggest misconception is that helium is harmless because it does not burn. The danger here lies in oxygen displacement. Children are vulnerable because they may burst balloons close to their face or inhale the released gas

—Mahesh Kumar, fire safety consultant

DEADLY WATER

Mysterious fishkill, pelican deaths raise alarm at Harohalli Lake

PAGE 8

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OBESITY IS A DISEASE.[1]
Everyone is different, but many people find it hard to achieve and maintain their weight goals.[2,3]
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THINGS TO DO

01 Groove along

Known for his soulful vocals and heartfelt compositions, Gajendra Verma will be performing live, bringing a night of music, emotions, and memories. **Where: Orion Mall, Rajajinagar; When: February 7, 6 pm**

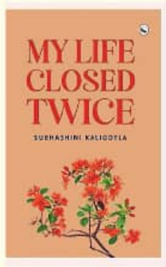
02 Transported in time

Atta Galatta is hosting the launch of Soul Climate, the latest novel by acclaimed writer Inez Baranay. Soul Climate reimagines the idea of India through the perspective of Turkish intellectual and freedom fighter Halide Edib, who visited Delhi in 1935 to deliver a series of lectures. **Where: Atta Galatta, Indiranagar; When: Dec 28, 6 pm**

03 New year bash

SOCIAL invites guests across its outlets pan-India to ring in the New Year with SOCIAL ANIMALS, a concept built around the idea that no two people party the same way. **Where: All SOCIAL outlets; When: December 31, 7 pm**

04 Soulful depths



Author Subhashini Kaligotla will be launching her new poetry collection 'My Life Closed Twice', with Jeet Thayil. The collection charts the long aftermath of grief, and its recursive, obsessive cadences. **Where: Atta Galatta, Indiranagar; When: December 28, 6.30 pm**

05 Dad jokes

Jaspreet Singh will be taking the stage to talk about his wildest job yet - being a father, navigating his innate irresponsible nature to the absurdities of modern parenting, in a show about men, fatherhood, love and loss. **Where: Alliance Francaise, Vasanth Nagar; When: January 31, February 1, 8 pm**

Climate action finds its flow

Initiative aims to create infrastructure network to tackle urban environmental challenges, while strengthening water security, biodiversity, climate resilience near Gubbalala Lake

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Officials held a meeting with residents to discuss the BGIN project

With Bengaluru facing growing water shortages and the loss of green spaces due to rapid urban growth, the Bommanahalli Zone Blue-Green Infrastructure Network (BGIN) project is said to emerge as an important step to address these challenges. Aligned with the Bengaluru Climate Action and Resilience Plan (BCAP), the BGIN project, in the Bommanahalli Zone, around Gubbalala Lake, is aiming to show how better urban planning can reconnect lakes, wetlands, open spaces and local communities to build a stronger and more climate-resilient city.

Conceived as a demonstration project under BluGreenUru, an initiative launched by the then BBMP, the initiative emphasises participatory climate action bringing citizens, civic agencies and experts together to conserve, restore and seamlessly integrate Bengaluru's blue and green assets into the urban fabric. The BCAP provides a citywide roadmap for a low carbon, just, equitable and resilient growth, identifying 266 targeted actions across seven sectors, with 33 thematic tracks aligned with India's national and global climate commitments.

Environmental decline

It is noted that Bengaluru is one of India's fastest-growing metropolises, with its population projected to nearly double, from 10 million in 2019 to about 20 million by 2050. Rapid urbanisation over the past few decades has led to increasing water stress and a significant reduction in green cover. The city's municipal area expanded almost threefold between 1990s and 2007, while water bodies declined by 74 per cent from 1973 to 2008, and green cover reduced by 59 per cent during the same period.

Project goals

The BGIN project in the Bommanahalli Zone aims to develop a linked network of natural and built infrastructure to tackle urban environmental challenges, while strengthening water security, biodiversity, climate resilience and community well-being in and around Gubbalala Lake and its connected raja kaluves (traditional stormwater drains).

The project is supported by WRI India under its partnership with the Climate Project Preparation Facility (CPPF), anchored by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA).

The Bommanahalli Zone was chosen because of its lowest percentage of dense vegetation along with Dasarahalli, which is only a quarter of the size of Bommanahalli. Bommanahalli also has the smallest sum of dense and sparse vegetation. Within the zone, the Gubbalala catchment lies between the two important biodiversity corridors of the Turahalli and Bannerghatta forests. The project aims to use native vegetation to restore ecological buffers, improve flood resilience, integrate Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to support groundwater recharge, stormwater capture, water reuse and reintegrate natural hydrological systems into the city's urban landscape.

Collective action

The project preparation is led by Compartment S4, an architecture and urban design firm. WRI India and Compartment S4, with the support of the Bengaluru South City Corporation, held a community interaction on December 20 in the Bommanahalli Zone to gather local, lived knowledge that will directly inform and refine the project.

Project intends to use native vegetation to restore ecological buffers, improve flood resilience, support groundwater recharge

During the meeting, residents mainly raised concerns about water shortage and sewage flowing into stormwater drains, and many expressed appreciation for the project and its goals. The long-term objective of the project is to be able to build on its learnings and apply them to other stretches of BGINs in the city that can be improved and given conducive conditions to thrive, making Bengaluru more resilient to heat and water stress.

Areas under tight watch as city heads out for New Year

With thousands of Bengalureans travelling out of the city to ring in the New Year, especially to tourist hotspots like the famous Hampi, the Vijayanagara district police have stepped up security to ensure celebrations do not spill into trouble. Police officials say a significant number of visitors for Christmas and New Year are from Bengaluru, prompting heightened vigilance across Hampi, Hosapete and other high-footfall areas in the district.

While the festive mood is unmistakable, the police have made it clear that celebrations must stay within the law. Additional personnel have been deployed at monuments, homestays, hotels, highways and popular gathering points, with strict action promised against rash driving, public nuisance and unruly behaviour. CCTV surveillance has been intensified in crowded zones, and regular patrolling has been launched to keep mischief-makers in check. The department has also gathered data on incoming tourists and is keeping a close watch on suspicious movements, with women's safety teams joining the effort. The message to Bengaluru travellers heading out for the long weekend is clear: celebrate responsibly, follow the rules and ensure the New Year begins on a safe note for everyone. — BMB

NEET 2026 syllabus out, aspirants get clear roadmap

Medical aspirants in Bengaluru preparing for NEET 2026 finally have clarity, with the National Medical Commission releasing the official syllabus for the undergraduate entrance exam. The move is expected to clear long-standing confusion among students aiming for MBBS, BDS and other medical courses. The Commission has advised candidates to strictly prepare as per the notified syllabus, which has been uploaded on its official website, and asked medical colleges and coaching centres to align their study material accordingly.

As per the syllabus, maximum focus has been placed on Biology, Physics and Chemistry, based entirely on NCERT textbooks of Classes 11 and 12. In Biology, students are advised to concentrate on both Botany and Zoology, with key areas including biodiversity, plant and animal anatomy, cell structure, biotechnology and ecology. Physics preparation should centre on PUC-level concepts such as units and measurements, motion and laws of motion, gravitation, magnetism and core formula-based problem solving. Chemistry will test fundamental concepts including atomic structure, chemical bonding, hydrocarbons, periodic table trends and basic reactions. Education experts have welcomed the move, saying a clearly defined syllabus will help students avoid overload. — BMB

Egg prices on the boil

Egg prices are on a steady upward climb, mirroring a similar rise in meat rates, leaving consumers and eateries feeling the pinch while poultry farmers smile their way to the bank. Over the last 15 to 20 days, egg prices have risen sharply across local markets. Bengaluru has seen wholesale prices for 100 eggs jump from Rs 400 to Rs 450 in August to Rs 580 to Rs 600 now. Retail prices have followed suit, with a single egg selling for Rs 7 to Rs 8 and a dozen touching Rs 90 to Rs 100, putting pressure on bakeries, hotels, dhabas and small retailers.

Traders said that the crunch is sharper for native country eggs, which are rarely available and cost almost double that of farm eggs. While farm eggs retail at around Rs 5, native eggs are priced between Rs 10 and Rs 12 each, with a dozen now selling for as high as Rs 150 since the onset of winter. Traders blame the surge on lower production due to erratic weather and poultry diseases, coupled with higher winter demand, increased exports and festive consumption driven by Christmas and New Year cake orders. The situation has also forced schools to spend extra on egg procurement. — BMB

'Family Courts cannot issue lookout notices'

The Karnataka High Court has ruled that Family Courts do not have the authority to issue Look Out Circulars (LOCs) while executing maintenance orders passed under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which deals with financial support for wives, children and parents.

Justice Lalitha Kanneganti observed that an order granting maintenance under Section 125 CrPC creates a civil obligation, enforceable only through mechanisms provided in law. In cases of default, the court may resort to attachment of property, issuance of a warrant, or civil imprisonment, but cannot invoke criminal enforcement tools such as a Look Out Circular.

The court clarified that LOCs are meant to prevent accused persons or offenders from evading criminal proceedings and cannot be used as a means to recover maintenance arrears. Continuing an LOC despite a judicial order suspending it, the court held, amounts to illegality and contempt of court, besides violating the right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

The ruling came on a petition filed by Mohammed Azeem, who challenged an order dated October 30, 2024, passed by the Principal Judge of the Family Court in Mangaluru. The Family Court had allowed the wife's application and directed issuance of a Look Out Circular against the husband for non-compliance with a maintenance order.

Accepting the petitioner's arguments, the High Court held that the Family Court lacked the power to issue a Look Out Circular while executing an order under Section 125 CrPC.

The court also took serious note of the practice of authorities failing to withdraw LOCs even after courts pass orders suspending them.

Allowing the petition, the High Court set aside the Family Court's order issuing the Look Out Circular.

—BMB

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This challan's a ticket to trouble

With rise in cases involving malicious files disguised as RTO challans used to siphon off money, officials urge citizens to exercise caution while downloading applications

Atiya Firdos
c-syeda.atiya@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

The South East CEN Police Station have registered two back-to-back cyber fraud cases after fraudsters allegedly duped two city residents of more than Rs 16.8 lakh by circulating malicious APK files disguised as RTO challan notifications through WhatsApp groups. In both cases, the victims reported unauthorised debits from their bank accounts shortly after clicking on the APK files.

In the first case, filed on December 22, the complainant stated that an APK file claiming to be an RTO challan was shared in a WhatsApp group. Believing it to be genuine, he clicked on the file, following which Rs 6.3 lakh was fraudulently deducted from his private bank account. On noticing the unauthorised transaction, the complainant immediately contacted the national cybercrime helpline 1930 and later approached the police station to lodge a formal complaint against the unknown accused.

In a similar incident reported on December 24, the complainant informed police that he too had received a fake RTO challan APK file through a WhatsApp group. After clicking on the file, fraudsters allegedly gained access to his private bank account and siphoned off Rs 10.4 lakh in multiple transactions. The complainant immediately alerted the cybercrime helpline and subsequently filed a complaint seeking legal action against those responsible.

During the course of the investigation, police traced multiple bank accounts allegedly used by the accused to receive portions of the defrauded money. According to officials, two accounts were found to have received transfers of Rs 4.98 lakh each, while another account received Rs 49,900. These transactions were identified on December 24, following which steps were initiated to trace the money trail and freeze the accounts.

Once downloaded, APK files concealed as challans allegedly compromise victim's device, allowing fraudsters to access sensitive data

APK-based modus operandi

Similar frauds involving fake RTO challan messages have been reported across the city and other parts of the state in recent months, with cybercriminals luring unsuspecting users into downloading malicious application files circulated through messaging platforms. In several cases, victims told police that after clicking the link or installing the file, fraudsters gained unauthorised access to their mobile phones and siphoned off money from bank accounts linked to mobile banking applications, often without the victims' immediate knowledge.

Investigation suggests that the accused are circulating malicious APK files disguised as official RTO challan notifications. Once downloaded and opened, the APK allegedly compromises the victim's device, allowing fraudsters to access sensitive data, including banking credentials, and carry out unauthorised transactions.

Multiple FIRs registered

Police records indicate that fake e-challan and RTO-related cyber frauds have been frequent enough to prompt multiple FIRs by local cybercrime units, with victims reporting losses ranging from tens of thousands to several lakhs of rupees.

In one identified malware campaign alone, investigators found that over 4,400 devices were compromised, resulting in fraudulent transactions exceeding Rs 16 lakh.

Police have urged citizens to remain cautious and avoid downloading APK files or clicking on links claiming to be traffic challans received through WhatsApp, SMS, or other messaging platforms. Officials advised motorists to verify challan details only through official transport department websites, stressing that government agencies do not circulate challans through downloadable application files. Citizens have also been asked to immediately report suspicious messages or transactions to cybercrime authorities.

United voices seek justice in Hubballi honour killing

A coalition of organisations has demanded justice in the alleged honour killing of a six-month pregnant woman in Hubballi, describing the incident as a brutal reminder of the continued grip of caste and patriarchy on society.

The incident took place on December 21, when a pregnant Manya was allegedly killed by her father and other relatives. Her husband, Vivekananda, and his parents were also attacked and sustained serious injuries. According to the organisations, the violence was triggered by Manya's inter-caste marriage to Vivekananda, who belongs to a Dalit community.

Condemning the killing, the organisations said the crime exposes how caste continues to dictate personal relationships and suppress women's autonomy. "There is nothing honourable about these so-called 'honour killings', which are nothing but cold-blooded murders," the coalition said, adding that such acts are instruments of caste and patriarchy meant to enforce endogamy and control women's choices through fear and terror.

According to the organisations, the couple had moved to Haveri after their marriage due to threats to their lives and had returned to their village near Belagali in Hubballi shortly before the attack. They questioned why adequate protection was not provided despite the perceived risk and how such a violent incident was allowed to take place.

"It is not sufficient to act only after such incidents," they said, calling for immediate preventive action and long-term measures to eradicate caste-based violence.

The coalition has demanded immediate compensation for Manya's family, complete protection for Vivekananda and his relatives, and a government job for Vivekananda. It has also sought a fair, prompt and impartial investigation to ensure that all those involved in planning, abetting or carrying out the crime are prosecuted and punished.

Further, the organisations have urged the state government to initiate public consultations to frame a comprehensive law against such crimes, strictly implement Supreme Court directions, and undertake sensitisation programmes for the police, local authorities and the public to challenge caste and patriarchal norms.

—BMB

KAUSHIK JN

Groups came together to demand action in honour killing case

Pitfalls of infra work: School zone has turned hazardous

Frazer Town locals demand swift action as unsecured excavation zones threaten children, parents, and elderly pedestrians near school area

Iffath Fathima
iffath.fathima@timesofindia.com
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Residents of Frazer Town have flagged serious safety concerns on Mosque Road, where ongoing white-topping, drainage and footpath works are underway. Areas near Haji Sir Ismail Sait School have been left with open, unbarricaded pits, alarming residents. They say incomplete footpaths outside the school gate pose a grave risk to students, with contractors failing to secure the site despite days of excavation, raising fears of accidents involving children and pedestrians.

According to locals, restoration work, including white-topping, drainage pipelines and footpath repairs, is progressing near the school, but safety measures are glaringly absent. "The footpaths outside the school gate have been dug up for days, and nothing has been done to close or barricade the pits. Children walk past these open holes every day, and it's only a matter of time before someone gets hurt," said Habiba Subhan, a social activist from Frazer Town.

Residents say they have repeatedly approached municipal authorities and the contractor responsible, urging immediate safety interventions such as barricades, warning signs or temporary coverings. However, despite multiple complaints, no corrective action has reportedly been taken. "We have requested them several times, but the open pits remain, leaving students vulnerable. The dug portion is huge on both sides, and it is definitely risky," Subhan said.

Unsecured roadworks put schoolchildren and pedestrians at daily risk

She added that makeshift arrangements were inadequate. "Some parts are blocked with paper ropes tied from one end to another, but that is not enough. It is still easy for small children to fall even with that in place. Proper safety measures should be taken, especially when it concerns children," she added.

Local parents have echoed these concerns, pointing out that the area witnesses heavy pedestrian movement. "This is a busy stretch used daily by students, parents and residents. We cannot wait for an accident to happen before action is taken," a parent said.

Residents also expressed frustration over delays in completing the road works. They said portions where work has been completed remain strewn with debris, making the stretch risky for daily commuters. Some residents complained that certain drainage sections have not been cleaned fully, even as concreting has begun near the Haji Sir Ismail Sait mosque.

> **"The footpaths outside the school gate have been dug up for days, and nothing has been done to close or barricade the pits**
> – Habiba Subhan, Social activist

Another resident warned that unprotected open pits are extremely dangerous, noting that similar conditions in the past have led to people falling into open drains or broken footpaths and sustaining injuries. "With children often unaware of such risks, even minor slips or falls could result in severe injuries," the resident said. Although authorities conducted an inspection on Wednesday, residents said they are still waiting for visible safety measures to be implemented to prevent potential accidents.

Extended parking time fails to fix airport chaos

Airport revises kerbside pickup rules twice, yet commuters remain frustrated over distance accessibility concerns and perceived preferential treatment for select taxis

After facing sharp criticism from commuters and cab drivers over the new kerbside pick-up arrangements at Terminal 1, Kempegowda International Airport on Friday revised its plan twice within a day, easing some of the pain points flagged by passengers. The airport operator announced that the free parking duration at Terminal 1 arrival pick-up zones P3 and P4 has now been extended from 10 minutes to 15 minutes, effective from Friday, citing feedback from passengers and stakeholders.

Bangalore Mirror
Parking rule creates furore at Bengaluru airport as fliers report long walks to designated pick-up zones that is proving troublesome to elderly and those with more luggage; move favours cab aggregators, say passengers
ROUGH LANDING FOR NEW RULE
Citizen starts online petition to urge BIAL

BM reported on Dec 25 about how the new cab pickup rules at the airport are causing inconvenience to fliers

In its revised statement, the airport said the change was aimed at offering greater flexibility to passengers and families, while also ensuring smoother traffic flow at the arrivals level. To further support movement, a fleet of shuttle buses operating every seven minutes, along with six cars and 10 buggies, has been deployed to ferry passengers between the terminal and the P3 and P4 pick-up areas.

The earlier announcement issued on Friday, which triggered widespread criticism, had also introduced a new provision allowing corporate taxis with yellow boards to pick up passengers from a dedicated fifth lane at the Terminal 1 departures drop-off zone, near Mitti Café and Shri Sagar. This facility, which carries a pick-up charge of Rs 275 with a 15-minute window, continues under the revised plan, in addition to pick-ups from P3 and P4. Clear signage has been promised to guide passengers to this lane.

The facility, charging Rs 275 for a 15-minute pickup window, will continue alongside P3 and P4 access, with clear signage promised for passenger guidance

However, commuter response suggests the revision may not have fully addressed the core issue. Many passengers have pointed out that the main problem was never the waiting time for cabs but the long distance they are required to walk, often close to a kilometre, to reach pick-up points. Commuters have said this is particularly difficult for senior citizens, persons with disabilities, pregnant women and those travelling with heavy luggage.

Several travellers also feel the revised arrangement creates an uneven playing field, as only select categories of taxis get closer access, while regular taxi operators booked directly by passengers continue to be pushed farther away. There is a perception that the system favours certain aggregators, leaving both passengers and independent drivers at a disadvantage.

Some commuters have also criticised the airport's planning and execution, arguing that cosmetic changes and information graphics do little to solve the practical difficulties on the ground. While the extended free parking time has been welcomed as a small relief, many say the fundamental concern of walkable access to pick-up points remains unresolved. — BMB

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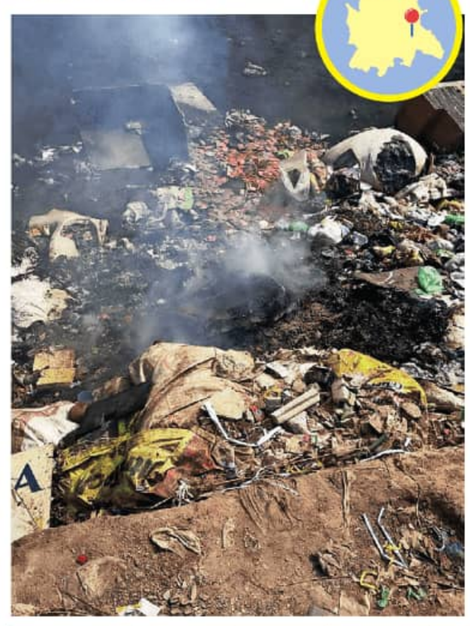
Power failure
Indiranagar

Streetlight on 11th Main, Indiranagar, near ESI facility is not functioning, causing concern for residents and commuters.

Waste burning
Austin Town



Garbage burning reported on Old Race Course Road, near a college and adjacent to Government Primary School, Austin Town.

Dangerous wiring
Halasuru

Unattended cables hang dangerously on footpath near Halasuru Police Station, posing serious risk to pedestrians.

B'luru exceeds targets in pulse polio

Bengaluru districts recorded strong coverage during the State Consolidated National Immunisation Day (NID) held on December 24, according to the fourth-day report released by the Health Department. Data showed that BBMP limits and both urban and rural districts exceeded their targets, contributing significantly to Karnataka's overall success in the Pulse Polio programme.

Under BBMP jurisdiction, against a target of 11.20 lakh children, over 11.65 lakh were administered polio drops, achieving 104% coverage. Most vaccinations were carried out at booths, supported by extensive house-to-house visits to cover repeat and missed households.

Bengaluru Urban district achieved 103% coverage by vaccinating 2.12 lakh children against a target of 2.05 lakh, while Bengaluru Rural recorded an impressive 112% coverage, reaching over 1.11 lakh children through effective outreach.

Statewide, Karnataka surpassed its target of 62.4 lakh children, covering 64.25 lakh.

NYE restriction at parks

Public entry to all parks and lakes under the jurisdiction of the Bengaluru West City Corporation will be restricted from 6 pm on December 31 in view of New Year celebrations.

Issuing the order, Development Additional Commissioner Daljit Kumar said the decision was taken as a precautionary measure to maintain public safety and prevent any untoward incidents. With New Year 2026 falling on Wednesday, December 31, large gatherings are expected across the city on Tuesday night, which could potentially disturb public peace.

As part of the arrangements, officials have been directed to install signboards at all parks and lakes informing the public about the restrictions. The Corporation will also coordinate with the Police Department to ensure effective implementation of the order. —BMB

Cities draining the life out of K'taka's rivers

Legislative data exposes extensive river pollution across districts, linking unchecked urban growth and failing sewage systems to rising ecological and public health risks

Environmentalists warn that sustained pollution is reducing rivers' natural self-purification capacity, accelerating ecological damage across multiple districts

Sridhar.Vivan
@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @sridharVMIRROR

Urban local bodies in Karnataka once flourished on the banks of rivers, turning them into centres of growth and prosperity. Ironically, the same cities that grew and thrived along these waterways are now busy choking them, as untreated sewage and industrial effluents turn rivers into open drains. According to data presented recently in the legislature, stretches of rivers across districts including Ramanagara, Mandya, Davanagere and Shivamogga are heavily polluted, posing serious threats to both communities and ecosystems.

The data highlights alarming levels of contamination in several major rivers. The Arkavathi River, from the Thippagondanahalli Reservoir near Bengaluru, has about 55 km of polluted stretch, affecting urban settlements such as Bengaluru, Ramanagara and Kanakapura. In Mandya district, the Shimsha River between Yediyur and Halagur Bridge has nearly 80 km of contaminated water impacting areas including Maddur. Similarly, in Davanagere district, the Tungabhadra River from Harihara to Haralahalli shows around 60 km of polluted stretch, affecting towns such as Ranibennur and Honnali. In Shivamogga district, a 10 km stretch of the Bhadra River between Bhadravathi and Holehonnur is also reported to be significantly polluted, impacting Bhadravathi and surrounding areas.

The report identifies urban local bodies located along riverbanks as major contributors to pollution due to inadequate sewage treatment facilities and poor effluent management. Areas near densely populated towns, industrial clusters and municipal discharge points are particularly vulnerable. Communities that depend on these rivers for drinking water, irrigation and daily needs face growing health risks, while aquatic life continues to decline due to sustained chemical and biological contamination.

Polluted rivers near cities expose poor waste management, threatening Karnataka's freshwater security, livelihoods, ecosystems, and drinking water

Environmental activist Divya D warned that without strict monitoring and enforcement, pollution levels could worsen further, leading to long-term ecological damage. She said unchecked discharge of sewage, industrial waste and solid waste weakens rivers' natural self-purification capacity and increases the risk of waterborne diseases.

Experts have called for urgent investment in sewage treatment infrastructure, stricter enforcement of environmental laws and active oversight by state authorities. They stress that community participation, coupled with timely intervention by municipal bodies, is essential to restore the health of Karnataka's rivers and prevent further degradation.

CRIME FILES

Hospital technician held after filming nurses

A 23-year-old junior technician working at a private multi-speciality hospital in Bengaluru has been arrested for allegedly secretly recording videos of female staff members, including nurses, while they were changing clothes inside the operation theatre (OT).

The accused, identified as Suvendu Mohantan, a native of West Bengal, had been employed at the hospital for about a year. Police said he had authorised access to restricted OT areas as part of his job. Investigators alleged that he concealed his mobile phone in strategic locations inside the OT to record women staff during shift changeovers and later retrieved the device when the area was vacant.

The incident came to light on Monday morning after women staff noticed Mohantan behaving suspiciously inside the unit. According to police, one staff member reportedly saw him watching videos on his phone and immediately alerted hospital authorities. An internal inquiry was conducted, following which the management approached the police.

Based on a complaint filed by the hospital director, a case was registered at Annapoorneshwari Nagar police station. Mohantan was taken into custody, and his mobile phone was seized for forensic analysis. Police said several videos were found on the device and are probing whether the footage was shared or stored elsewhere. Investigators are also checking if similar recordings were made in other areas, including dressing rooms. Further investigation is ongoing.

Additionally, police have registered the case under relevant sections of the Information Technology Act and said hospital authorities are cooperating fully as investigators examine security protocols and possible lapses that allowed the offence to occur.

—BMB

Relationship dispute ends in nurse's murder

A 39-year-old staff nurse was found murdered in her rented house in Kumaraswamy Layout in south Bengaluru, with police arresting her junior colleague in connection with the crime. The incident occurred on the night of December 24 and came to light around 11 am the next day.

The victim, Mamata, an unmarried woman from Chitradurga, worked as a staff nurse at Jayadeva Hospital. She lived in the house with a friend who had travelled to her hometown, leaving Mamata alone on the night of the incident. When she failed to answer repeated phone calls, her family grew worried and alerted the landlord. On entering the house, Mamata was found dead, following which the police were informed.

An FIR was registered at the Kumaraswamy Layout police station, and a team conducted a spot inspection and preliminary investigation. Police later arrested the accused, Sudhakar, a junior colleague of the victim.

Investigators said the two had been in a relationship for about a year. However, Sudhakar's family had recently fixed his engagement to another woman, leading to frequent arguments, as Mamata was allegedly pressuring him to marry her. Police said Sudhakar entered the house, assaulted Mamata, and allegedly slit her throat with a knife. He reportedly took her gold chain to make the murder appear like a robbery. Further investigation is ongoing.

Further, police said forensic teams collected evidence from the scene, including the weapon used, and are recording statements from relatives and neighbours to strengthen the case and establish the sequence of events.

—BMB

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BENGALURU SPEAKS

and gets heard on this page

STORY BEHIND THE PHOTO

NATURE'S BRUTAL GRACE

Our reader shares a graceful image that reflects nature's stark truth—where death lurks everywhere and survival is relentless—reminding us that life in the wild often unfolds with ferocious and unforgiving cruelty.

The picture was clicked by reader **S Sampath Kumari**

If you have a picture and a story to share, send us the picture with your name and number at **mybangaloremirror@timesofindia.com**

Pre-ride tips banned, but will Bengaluru's cab woes end?

Centre's move restores fairness for commuters, but city's congestion, low fares and driver behaviour may blunt its real-world impact

The Centre's decision to ban pre-ride tipping on cab aggregator platforms such as Uber, Ola and Rapido has been welcomed by many commuters, though questions remain about how effectively the move will play out on the ground. Under the amended Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines 2025 issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, passengers can now see the tipping option only after completing a ride and only if they choose to tip voluntarily. The intent is to end what riders described as indirect pressure to pay extra even before a trip began.

For commuters, the change offers immediate relief, at least in principle. Over time, pre-ride tips had increasingly become a tool to secure ride acceptance, particularly during peak hours, late nights or adverse weather. "It stopped being a tip and became a condition. If you didn't add it, your ride wouldn't get accepted," said Karthik R, a software engineer who relies on app-based cabs daily. Many riders believe the ban restores transparency by linking payment strictly to service delivery rather than anticipation.

However, the city's ongoing mobility challenges may limit the impact. Heavy traffic congestion, long travel durations and rising fuel costs have already squeezed driver earnings. Drivers argue that advance tips helped offset low base fares and inconsistent incentives. "Without pre-ride tips, drivers may still cherry-pick rides or cancel, especially short trips or congested routes," said a driver operating along the Outer Ring Road. As a result, while the tip prompt may disappear, refusals and cancellations could persist.

Transport analysts say meaningful behavioural change will depend on whether aggregators revise fare structures and improve payouts. "The ban is a positive step, but it treats the symptom rather than the cause," said a mobility expert, pointing to structural issues in pricing and incentives. The guidelines also introduce an option for women passengers to choose women drivers, a progressive safety measure. However, its immediate impact may be limited due to the small number of women drivers currently on platforms.

Consumer groups stress that strict enforcement and app-level compliance will be key. Without firm action against retaliatory cancellations, they warn, commuter frustration may reduce—but not disappear. **— BMB**

Riders welcome relief from forced tipping, but experts warn cab services need fair pricing, better driver incentives and strict enforcement, or ride refusals and cancellations may persist despite the new rules

PICTURE FOR REPRESENTATION ONLY

Despite the ban on pre-ride tips, commuters fear cancellations may persist without stronger enforcement and fair compensation for drivers

DID YOU KNOW?

A paraplegic engineer from Germany fulfilled a lifelong dream on Saturday, blasting into space aboard a Blue Origin rocket and becoming the first wheelchair user to fly beyond Earth. Severely injured in a mountain biking accident seven years ago, Michaela Benthaus left her wheelchair behind in West Texas and floated freely as the New Shepard capsule soared more than 65 miles above the planet. Benthaus flew with five other passengers, including fellow German Hans Koenigsmann, a retired SpaceX executive who helped organise and sponsor her privately funded trip. Laughing throughout the ascent, the 33-year-old described the brief weightlessness as the coolest experience of her life. Blue Origin said only minor modifications were needed, including a transfer board and wheelchair access after landing, reflecting the capsule's accessibility design. Benthaus, part of the European Space Agency graduate trainee programme, had earlier experienced zero gravity flights and a simulated space mission. She said the journey proves disability need not limit ambition. Urging others not to abandon their dreams, Benthaus hopes her flight opens doors in space exploration and improves accessibility worldwide. — AP

GET HEARD WITH MIRROR

9591233247

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Trump claims fuel, power, coal wins; data shows mixed reality

Claim: Donald Trump claimed gasoline prices fell below $2 nationwide, 1,600 power plants would open within a year, electricity costs would drop sharply, and his policies revived coal jobs, wages, and miner incomes significantly.
Fact: Gasoline averages $2.896 nationally, power generation growth is modest and renewable-led, electricity prices are rising, coal employment declined, wages barely rose, and consumption gains appear temporary before expected declines driven by renewables.

US President Donald Trump took credit during his White House speech on Wednesday night for reducing gasoline prices, increasing power generation, and boosting the coal industry.

Gasoline prices

Trump said: "Gasoline is now under $2.50 a gallon in much of the country. In some states, it, by the way, just hit $1.99 a gallon."The facts: The national average price for a gallon of gasoline is $2.896, down from $3.034 a year ago, according to AAA's daily survey. The lowest prices can be found in Oklahoma, where the statewide average is $2.343, according to AAA. The price of gasoline is closely tied to the price of its feedstock, crude oil, which has been pressured in recent months by OPEC production increases and slowing economic growth.

Power generation

Trump said: "Within the next 12 months, we will have opened 1,600 electrical generating plants. And it's a record that won't be beaten by, I would say, by anybody, or certainly not very soon. Prices on electricity and everything else will fall dramatically."The facts: Power prices are rising fast amid a proliferation of new electricity-hungry data centres driven by AI, a key reason why Trump and his predecessor Joe Biden want to expand America's power generation. The US Energy Information Administration, the statistical wing of the Department of Energy, expects that U S power generation will have grown by 2.4% in 2025 and another 1.7% in 2026. That growth reverses shrinking U S power generation that had occurred between 2010 and 2020, a period when electricity demand was flat.

EIA data show, however, that the fastest growth in new generation is coming from solar and wind projects. Many of those projects had been in the pipeline for years and had benefited from federal subsidies that Trump has since cut. Trump's administration wants to reduce renewable energy's share and boost oil, gas, coal, and nuclear technologies instead.

Coal revival

Trump said in his speech that his administration was "bringing back clean, beautiful coal" and was raising the take-home pay of miners. "After years of record-setting falling incomes, our policies are boosting take-home pay at a historic pace… For miners, we're bringing back clean, beautiful coal. It's $3,300."

The facts: Employment in the coal industry was around 41,200 in November, down from 42,300 a year earlier, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The average hourly earnings of miners were around $35.72 in October, up from $35.65 a year earlier, according to the data.Coal consumption in the United States, meanwhile, was expected to increase by 9% in 2025, driven by an 11% increase in demand from the electric power sector, according to the EIA.Coal consumption is expected to fall in 2026 as electric power generation from renewable sources increases, however. **— Reuters**

Devanahalli emerges as plot hotspot

Airport belt becomes prime destination as premium land buying accelerates amid infrastructure push near Bengaluru

Devanahalli, long known for its proximity to Kempegowda International Airport and the rapidly developing aerospace and IT corridors, has witnessed a surge in demand for premium residential plots. Industry experts say the trend is being driven by investors and end-users seeking spacious plots with modern amenities at comparatively lower prices than in central Bengaluru.

"The demand for premium plots in Devanahalli has never been higher," says Ramesh Kumar, a senior real estate broker. "With the airport expansion, international schools and upcoming IT parks, buyers are willing to pay a premium for plots that offer good connectivity and lifestyle benefits."

Developers report record enquiries, particularly for gated communities offering plots often complemented by parks, clubhouses and 24/7 security. The area's appeal also lies in its connectivity. National Highway 44 and the upcoming Peripheral Ring Road have made Devanahalli a preferred residential destination for IT professionals commuting to Whitefield, Hebbal and the airport vicinity.

"Investors see long-term appreciation potential, while end-users are looking for a serene residential environment away from the city's congestion," adds Kumar.

Market analysts predict demand for premium plots will continue to grow over the next few years, driven by infrastructure development and the rise of integrated townships. **Prakash VL**

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New metro, rail links boost realty

The Karnataka government has proposed the preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) to extend the Bengaluru Metro and regional rail links to multiple satellite towns, a move aimed at easing congestion and driving the next phase of infrastructure-led real estate growth. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said the proposed DPRs would lay the groundwork for long-term mobility solutions connecting the city with its fast-growing outskirts.

The Deputy Chief Minister also submitted a proposal for Phase 3A of the Metro, a 36.59-km corridor from Sarjapur to Hebbal with 28 stations, estimated to cost ₹28,405 crore. In addition, he sought approval to prepare DPRs for Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridors linking Bengaluru with Bidadi, Mysuru, Kanakapura, Nelamangala, Tumakuru, Kempegowda International Airport, Chikkaballapur, Hoskote and Kolar. According to Shivakumar, these proposed extensions would not only reduce pressure on the city's road network but also spur planned residential and commercial development across emerging corridors, setting the stage for Bengaluru's next realty boom. **BMB**

Certificate chaos leaves buyers stranded

Even as apartment construction continues at a rapid pace in the city, the Occupancy Certificate (OC) and Completion Certificate (CC) issued by local bodies have emerged as major sources of confusion, leaving homebuyers distressed while allowing builders to make undue gains.

The problem stems from conflicting interpretations of OC and CC across the RERA Act, the KMC Act, BBMP rules and the newly implemented BGA Act, with definitions that do not align. This lack of uniformity has prompted Karnataka RERA Chairman Rakesh Singh to seek urgent clarification from the state government.

In a detailed five-page letter to Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh, Urban Development Additional Chief Secretary Tushar Girinath and the Chief Minister's Additional Chief Secretary Anjum Parvez, the KRERA chairman has flagged how varying meanings assigned to OC and CC by urban local bodies are exacerbating confusion. While RERA clearly distinguishes CC as certification of construction completion as per approved plans and OC as permission to occupy a fully serviced building, local laws often blur this distinction or use the terms interchangeably. Singh has urged the government to either issue a clear clarification or mandate that all local authorities uniformly follow RERA's precise and comprehensive definitions. Homebuyer groups point out that, under RERA, builders must obtain a CC before handing over maintenance to apartment associations, and that an OC is not proof of project completion. **BMB**

Sales dip even as prices rise

Bengaluru witnessed a modest dip in residential sales in 2025 even as overall values climbed, according to ANAROCK Research. Housing volumes across the top seven cities fell 14% year on year, with Bengaluru recording a 5% drop to around 62,205 units sold.

However, the total sales value across these cities rose 6% to over ₹6 lakh crore.

The city also led in new launches, adding roughly 74,260 units — a 5% increase over 2024 — with nearly 79% of these in the ₹75 lakh–₹2.5 crore segment.

Despite healthy launches, unsold inventory in Bengaluru surged 23%, reflecting tapered demand amid higher property prices, which collectively rose by around 8% across the top seven cities. Market trends show luxury and mid-segment homes driving new supply, while price growth remained in single digits, signalling a stabilising market ahead of a potential demand revival in 2026. **BMB**

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Fish and pelicans found dead at Yelahanka Lake

Environmentalists urge authorities to conduct immediate on-site inspection and water quality assessment

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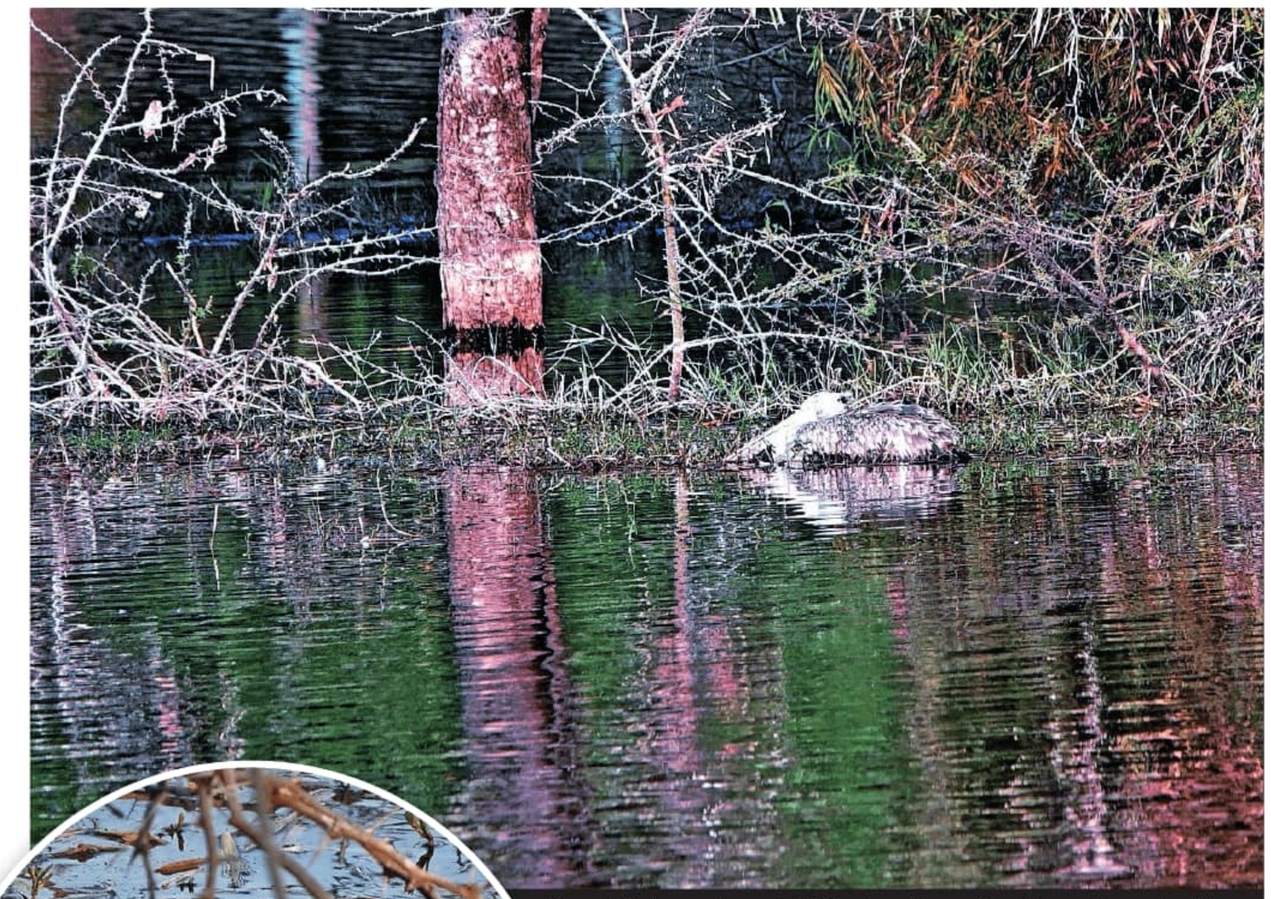

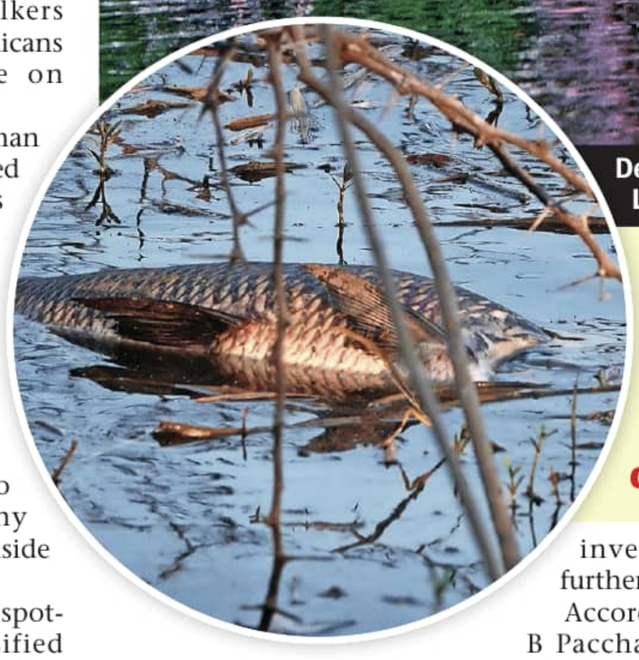

Dead fish and spot-billed pelican lie along Harohalli Lake's edge, raising environmental concerns

Environmental activists warn of oxygen depletion, sewage inflow, and toxic contamination as protected pelicans collapse alongside carp, prompting urgent calls for official testing

A mysterious fish kill and the deaths of protected water birds have triggered serious environmental concerns at Harohalli Lake in Yelahanka, after walkers reported dead fish and pelicans along the lake's edge on Thursday.

Dr V Selvarajan, chairman of Green Circle, who visited the lake following alerts from regular visitors, said around 12 dead fish were found along the periphery of the lake. "Most of the dead fish appear to belong to the common carp species, each measuring between 12 and 18 inches. We do not yet know how many more fish may be dead inside the lake," he said.

More alarmingly, two spot-billed pelicans — classified as Near Threatened by the IUCN — were also found dead. According to Dr Selvarajan, around 12 pelicans had been observed perched on trees on the island within the lake earlier this week. "Apart from the two dead pelicans, I noticed another pelican standing motionless in the water near the island. It appeared extremely weak and may not survive," he added. Environmentalists fear the incident could be linked to deteriorating water quality. Dr Selvarajan suspects a sharp drop in dissolved oxygen levels or contamination from untreated sewage entering the lake. "From my experience, this could be due to pollutants from nearby residential colonies mixing with the lake water. Such conditions can lead to fish suffocation and secondary poisoning of birds that feed on them," he explained.

He urged the authorities concerned to conduct an immediate on-site inspection and water quality assessment. "This is not a natural occurrence and must be treated as an environmental crime. I am ready to accompany officials at any time to investigate and prevent further damage," he said.

According to Raghavendra B Pacchapur, a lake activist, fish-kill incidents in Bengaluru lakes usually occur due to sewage inflow. "The majority of lakes in Bengaluru have issues with sewage inflow, and when water quality suddenly deteriorates, it becomes uninhabitable for aquatic life. The common reason is a sharp drop in dissolved oxygen levels, often caused by sewage inflow or decaying organic matter. At Harohalli Lake, we have observed large numbers of fish dying, which indicates that this is due to sewage inflow, and the larger fish are not finding sufficient oxygen in the water."

Another major cause is pollution from chemicals, pesticides, or industrial and domestic waste entering the lake, either directly or through stormwater drains. Such pollutants can be toxic to fish and also affect the food chain, impacting birds that feed on contaminated fish. Sudden temperature changes, stagnant water conditions, and a lack of regular desilting and monitoring further worsen the situation, making urban lakes especially vulnerable to repeated fish kill incidents.

Residents noted the lake's improved cleanliness and water levels but urged a probe into the fish and bird deaths. "Four more dead fish were spotted on Friday. GBA and KSPCB must test the water," a resident said.

Coach Vikram, athletes Mohit Paul, Soumya, Bharathi B, and coach Roshan Bachchan.

Five medals lift state's para pride

Three athletes from Karnataka won three gold and two silver medals at the Asian Youth Para Games 2025 in Dubai, demonstrating remarkable talent and commitment to para sport.

Leading the medal haul was Mohit Pal from Nelamangala, who delivered a sensational performance in track events despite coming from a modest background. Competing in the partially sighted category, Mohit clinched gold medals in the 100 metres and 200 metres, while adding a silver medal in the 400 metres.

Mohit's journey is one of quiet perseverance. His father works as a driver, while his mother is a homemaker. For the past two years, Mohit has trained rigorously, balancing physical endurance with mental resilience—an effort that paid rich dividends on the Asian stage.

Another golden moment for Karnataka came from Soumya of Chamarajanagar, who also competed in the partially sighted category. Displaying remarkable stamina and race intelligence, Soumya secured a gold medal in the 1,500 metres, emerging as one of the standout distance runners at the Games.

Completing the medal tally was Bharathi Bharathesh from Mysuru, who competed in the cerebral palsy category. Bharathi earned a silver medal in the long jump, underlining technical skill and determination in field events.

Behind these victories stands the dedicated coaching team of the Indian Athletic Academy, Jayanagar, led by international athlete-turned-coach Roshan Bachchan, along with coach Vikram, a former state and national athlete.

Speaking on the occasion, Roshan Bachchan reflected on the academy's journey. "In 2018, my friend Rahul introduced me to two visually impaired girls who later went on to win medals at junior- and senior-level competitions. We realised that with the right training and discipline, these athletes could achieve great things," he said.

He added that after the COVID-19 pandemic, he set up a gym to train selected athletes more intensively. "In 2022–23, Vikram joined us and began coaching athletes. Mohit, Soumya and Bharathi received structured training, and their hard work has now resulted in medals at the Asian Youth Para Games."

Roshan said preparations are already under way for bigger international platforms. "Our next goals are the World Para Athletics Grand Prix, Senior Asian Games, and Olympics. We are training these children for global competition and seek society's support to help them excel." These young para athletes have brought glory to Karnataka and inspired many, showing that talent and dedication can overcome all limits. **— BMB**

SOCIALTATTLE

That went viral

As much as everyone loves dosa as a breakfast favourite and quick getaway meal, a social media user pointed out that dosas are getting thinner and crispier by the day, losing the charm of a well-made dosa that should be soft inside and crisp only at the edges.

Sanjeev @geniusparadox · 1d
As much as I love Bengaluru Cafe, VB, CTR, Umesh's etc, they need to stop papadification of masaale dosay! Its getting thinner and crispier by the day and losing the charm of a well made dosay which is essentially softer all through and crispier only at the edges. Maga MDGA!!
Srinivasa S @photomithra · 1d
Good morning. ಶುಭೋದಯ
TinDi coffee ayta?

@panathurjyothege group highlighted that shops have occupied Panathur Main Road for months. Even during road relaying, the contractor didn't remove them and Traffic chaos continues.

Panathur Jyothege @panathurjy... · 1d
This Shipra are on the Panathur main road from month's, while laying the road contractor did not remove this shops. It is blocking traffic @GBAChiefComm @GbaEastCity7056 @MALimbavali

What's tweeting

A X user posted about the illegal banners continue to choke Nayandahalli–Outer Ring Road under RR Nagar limits, risking commuter safety daily. Complaints to BBMP Sahayavani, AEE, and GBA West for over a week and no action taken.

ಸನಾತನ (ಸ.ಏ.ಎ.ಟ) @sanatan ka... · 16h
Illegal banners continue to obstruct roads & endanger commuters on Nayandahalli/Outer Ring Road (RR Nagar limits). Complaints lodged for over a week yet no action from RR Nagar AEE, BBMP Sahayavani, or GBA West Division. High Court orders exist, so why selective enforcement? Who Show more

A social media user expressed disappointment over Madiwala Lake's deteriorating condition. Despite GBA launching a de-weeding machine just yesterday, residents report that the lake remains in poor shape. Citizens are urging authorities to take more effective and sustained measures for lake restoration.

Amith Subramanian
@amithpallavoor1
X.com
Madiwala lake in a state of mess. What is @GBA_office trying to achieve here? @RLR_BTM @ChristinMP_ @murali772
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OPP. NPS SCHOOL (3 & 4-BHK)
₹ 1.45 - 2.17 Cr*
8880 461 461

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G+4
NEAR ELECTRONIC CITY
₹ 67.92 L - 1.34 Cr*
8880 013 310

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G+14
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₹ 58.45 - 92.06 Lakhs*
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G+14
SOUKYA ROAD
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₹ 62.42 - 82.18 Lakhs*
8880 013 310

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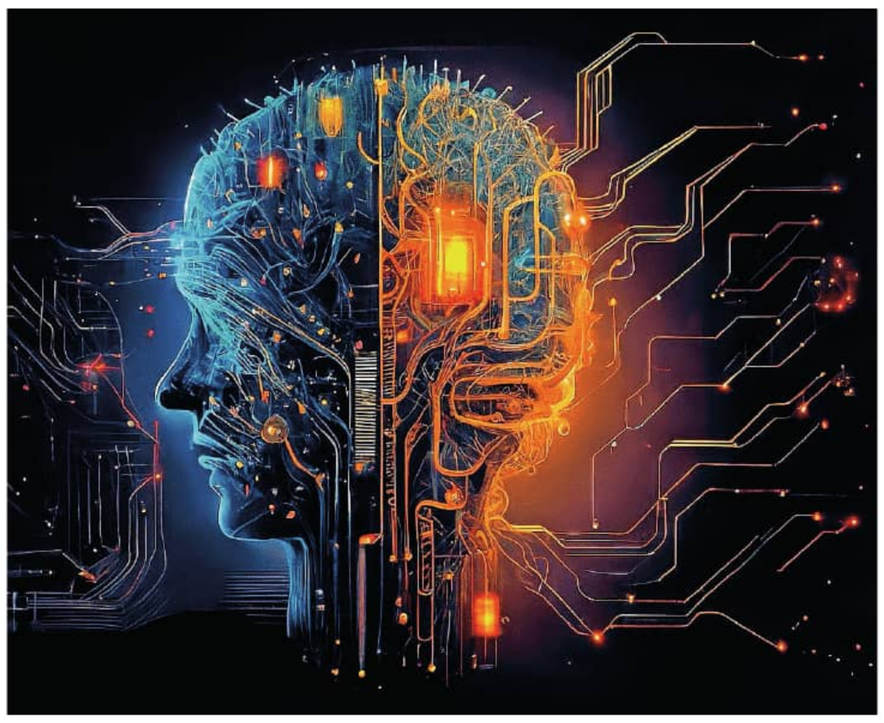
DONE DEAL

From OpenAI to Nvidia, firms channel billions into AI infra

Nvidia has agreed to licence technology from AI startup Groq for use in some of its artificial intelligence chips, marking the chipmaker's largest deal and underscoring its push to strengthen competitiveness amid surging demand.

Here is a list of multi-billion-dollar AI, cloud and chip deals signed recently:



OPENAI DEALS

AMAZON AND OPENAI

Amazon is considering an investment of around $10 billion in OpenAI, though talks remain "very fluid," according to a source who requested anonymity due to the private nature of their talks.

DISNEY AND OPENAI

Walt Disney to invest $1 billion in OpenAI and will let the ChatGPT-parent use characters from Star Wars, Pixar and Marvel franchises in its Sora AI video generator - a move that could transform Hollywood content creation.

As part of the three-year licensing agreement, Sora and ChatGPT Images will begin generating videos featuring licensed Disney characters such as Mickey Mouse, Cinderella, and Mufasa early next year. The deal excludes any talent likeness or voices.

BROADCOM & OPENAI OpenAI has partnered with Broadcom to produce its first in-house artificial intelligence processors, the latest tie-up for the world's most valuable startup for computing power amid surging demand for its services.

AMD AND OPENAI AMD agreed to supply artificial intelligence chips to OpenAI in a multi-year deal that would also give the ChatGPT creator the option to buy up to roughly 10% of the chipmaker.

NVIDIA AND OPENAI

Nvidia is set to invest up to $100 billion in OpenAI and supply it with data center chips, in a deal giving the chipmaker a financial stake in OpenAI. OpenAI is already an important customer for Nvidia.

ORACLE AND OPENAI

Oracle is reported to have signed one of the biggest cloud deals ever with OpenAI, under which the ChatGPT maker is expected to buy $300 billion in computing power from the company for about five years.

COREWEAVE AND OPENAI

CoreWeave signed a five-year contract worth $11.9 billion with OpenAI in March, before the Nvidia-backed startup's IPO.

STARGATE PROJECT

Stargate is a joint venture between SoftBank, OpenAI and Oracle to build data centers. The project was announced in January by U.S. President Donald Trump, who said that the companies would invest up to $500 billion to fund infrastructure for artificial intelligence.

META DEALS

META AND COREWEAVE

CoreWeave has signed a $14 billion agreement with Meta to supply computing power to the Facebook parent.

META AND ORACLE

Oracle is in talks with Meta for a multi-year cloud computing deal worth about $20 billion, underscoring the social media giant's drive to secure faster access to computing power.

META AND GOOGLE

Google struck a six-year cloud computing deal with Meta Platforms worth more than $10 billion, Reuters had reported in August.

META AND SCALE AI

Meta took a 49% stake for about $14.3 billion in Scale AI and brought in its 28-year-old CEO, Alexandr Wang, to play a prominent role in the tech giant's artificial intelligence strategy.

NVIDIA DEALS

NVIDIA AND GROQ

Nvidia has agreed to license chip technology from startup Groq and hire its CEO Jonathan Ross, who helped Google start its AI chip program, among other engineers at the company. CNBC reported that Nvidia had agreed to acquire Groq's assets for $20 billion.

MICROSOFT, NVIDIA, AND ANTHROPIC

Microsoft will invest up to $5 billion and Nvidia up to $10 billion in Anthropic, while the Claude maker will pledge $30 billion to run its workloads on Microsoft's cloud. Under the agreement, Anthropic will commit up to 1 gigawatt of compute, powered by Nvidia's advanced Grace Blackwell and Vera Rubin hardware. The company will also team up with Nvidia to improve chips and AI models for better performance.

NVIDIA-BACKED GROUP AND ALIGNED DATA CENTERS

An investor group including BlackRock, Microsoft and Nvidia is buying U.S.-based Aligned Data Centers, one of the world's biggest data center operators with nearly 80 facilities, in $40-billion deal.

NVIDIA AND INTEL

Nvidia will invest $5 billion in Intel, giving it 4% of the company after new shares are issued.

COREWEAVE AND NVIDIA

CoreWeave signed a $6.3 billion initial order with backer Nvidia, a deal that guarantees that the AI chipmaker will purchase any cloud capacity not sold to customers.

GOOGLE DEALS

GOOGLE AND TEXAS

Google will invest $40 billion in three new data centers in Texas through 2027. One of the data centers will be in Armstrong County, in the Texas Panhandle, and the other two in Haskell County, a stretch of West Texas near Abilene. The company is also continuing to invest in its existing Midlothian campus and Dallas cloud region, part of the company's global network of 42 cloud regions.

GOOGLE AND WINDSURF

Google hired key staff members from AI code generation startup Windsurf and will pay $2.4 billion in license fees as part of the deal to use some of Windsurf's technology under non-exclusive terms.

OTHERS

NEBIUS GROUP & MICROSOFT

Nebius Group will provide Microsoft with GPU infrastructure capacity in a deal worth $17.4 billion over a five-year term.

INTEL AND SOFTBANK GROUP

Intel is getting a $2 billion capital injection from SoftBank Group, making the Japanese tech investor one of the top-10 shareholders of the troubled U.S. chipmaker.

TESLA AND SAMSUNG

Tesla signed a $16.5 billion deal to source chips from Samsung Electronics, with the EV maker's CEO Elon Musk saying that the South Korean tech giant's new chip factory in Texas would make Tesla's next-generation AI6 chip.

AMAZON AND ANTHROPIC

Amazon.com pumped $4 billion into OpenAI competitor Anthropic, doubling its investment in the firm known for its GenAI chatbot Claude. **Reuters**

Frame legislation to regulate internet use by kids, Madras HC tells Centre

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court has observed that the Centre could consider framing a legislation to regulate the use of internet by kids, similar to a law in Australia.

Until such a legislation is in place, the state and national commission for protection of child rights could draft an action plan to create awareness among children on child rights and safe use of the internet, the court said.

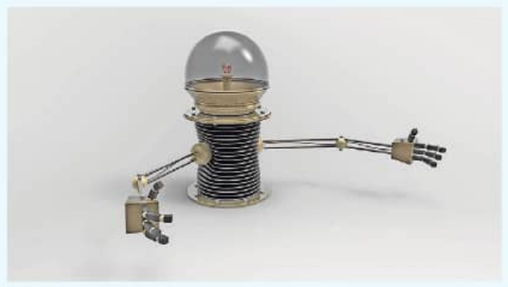
The framework suggested by the court aims at restricting children below 16 years from having social media accounts, amidst apprehensions over the minors' exposure to harmful online content. A division bench comprising Justices G Jayachandran and K K Ramakrishnan made the remarks recently after counsel K P S Palanivel Rajan, representing the petitioner S Vijayakumar, cited a new Australian law which banned social media usage by children under 16, and said India could consider introducing similar legislation.

Vijayakumar had filed the public interest litigation praying for a direction to the internet service providers (ISPs) to provide "parental window" service and to create awareness among the children through the authorities.

Rajan had contended that the petitioner sought the above relief as pornographic content was easily available online. **PTI**

BITS & BYTES

THIEF'S AI EXCUSE



An 18-year-old graphic designer, who claimed to have lost his job due to AI (artificial intelligence), has been arrested with his doctor-aspirant woman friend for allegedly stealing jewellery worth Rs 16 lakh, police said.

The teen duo told police that they were inspired by the 2005 film 'Bunty Aur Babli', said Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Shrikrishna Lalchandani on Thursday. They allegedly stole gold, silver, and diamond jewellery worth Rs 16.17 lakh from a shop in Indore's Rau police station area on the night of December 22, the official told reporters. **PTI**

COFORGE TO GET ENCORA

IT services firm Coforge on Friday said it will acquire 100 per cent stake in Silicon Valley-based AI firm Encora for an enterprise value of USD 2.35 billion (about Rs 21,133 crore).

The acquisition will be funded through an all-stock transaction. Coforge will issue preferential shares worth about USD 1.89 billion to Encora's current shareholders, including private equity giants Advent International and Warburg Pincus. Upon completion, the sellers will hold a 20 per cent stake in the expanded share capital of Coforge. "Coforge has signed a definitive agreement to acquire 100 per cent shares of Encora from Advent International, Warburg Pincus and other minority shareholders," Coforge said. **PTI**

PERSONALITY SECURED

The Delhi High Court has granted an ad-interim injunction in favour of actor and Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, restraining multiple online marketplaces, AI platforms, websites and unidentified entities from misusing his name, image, voice, likeness and other attributes of his personality for commercial gain.

A single-judge Bench of Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora passed the ex parte order in a suit filed by Kalyan seeking protection of his personality and publicity rights against unauthorised merchandise, impersonation, AI-generated content, deepfakes, and misleading online listings. **IANS**

 # Tough year
"We've been through a lot together especially earlier this year with 'abba'," says actor Sara Ali Khan

SANDALWOOD SHOTS
Y MAHESWARA REDDY

Pankaja at Sundance

Indian filmmaker Anooya Swamy makes her Sundance Film Festival debut with her film Pankaja, marking a historic moment for South Asian and specifically Kannada representation at one of the world's most influential cinema festivals as the first Kannadiga ever.

Pankaja will premiere at the festival, taking place in Salt Lake City, Utah, from January 22 to February 1. Pankaja is the first-ever Kannada short film to be officially selected and screened at Sundance.

Born and raised in Bengaluru, Anooya Swamy is currently pursuing her MFA in Film & TV Production at NYU Tisch School of the Arts. At NYU, she served as a teaching assistant to Oscar-winning director Spike Lee. She is also the first Indian from NYU Tisch to have a film selected at the Sundance Film Festival.

Anooya is the recipient of multiple prestigious international scholarships and honours, including the BAFTA Scholarship, Ang Lee Scholarship, Maurice Kanbar Scholarship, Matthew Mets Memorial Scholarship, and the Sundance Institute Ignite x Adobe Fellowship.

Priyanka's new look

666: Operation Dream Theatre has been buzzing with updates ever since its launch. The newest addition to the already star-studded movie is the actress Priyanka Mohan, and the team has now unveiled her first-look posters from the film.

In the two posters, Priyanka's appearance stands apart in both design and narrative hints. The posters present her in a vintage, dreamy aesthetic.

In the first poster, she appears against the backdrop of a majestic golden full moon, dressed in a lavender blouse and floral skirt. Fans have already taken notice of the earphones featured in this look, sparking speculation that the film may involve elements of time travel.

The second poster showcases her in a retro-inspired avatar, adorned in pearl jewellery, a floral dress, gloves, and a broad-brimmed hat, an image suited to a vintage-themed thriller.

These visuals hint at a unique narrative universe where elegance, mystery, and fantasy intersect, building further anticipation ahead of the film's release.

This comes after the first looks of Dr. Shiva Rajkumar and Dhananjaya, and peeks into the massive sets, vintage cameras.

Too much happening in cluttered tale of time travel

Vrusshabha
2.5 RATING ★★½☆☆
- **DIRECTOR** Nanda Kishore
- **ACTORS** Mohanlal, Samarjit Lankesh, Nayan Sarika, Ragini Dwivedi, Kishore, Ayyappa Sharma, Ali, and Garuda Ram
- **Duration** 127 minutes
- **Certification** U/A

This is upcoming actor Samarjit Lankesh's second film after his debut in Sandalwood with Gowri directed by his father Indrajit Lankesh. Though Samarjit has made all out efforts to prove his acting skills, especially in the action sequences, tepid screenplay and an unconvincing script play spoilsports. The bonding between father and son should have been interesting, but director Nanda Kishore failed to keep it so. The love scenes between Samarjit and Nayan Sarika look passive because both become friends, fall in love, break up, and reconcile at a great speed. These scenes are far from convincing.

The problem with this movie is that it has too many actors. The other issue is that it is trying to showcase too many things -- including a battle between a king and those who want to take away a Shiva Lingam that is considered to be the source of kingdoms' prosperity.

The movie begins in the kingdom Trilinga. Vijayendra Vrusshabha (Mohanlal) is the king, who considers protecting the Shiva Lingam as his sacred duty. While aiming to kill the enemy, Vrusshabha makes a mistake resulting in the death of a child. His mother curses Vrusshabha to suffer the woes inflicted by his son. Later, Vrusshabha and his queen Trilochana Devi (Ragini Dwivedi) are blessed with a baby boy but they end up losing him.

At this juncture, the movie shifts to Mumbai, 2025, where Adideva Varma (Mohanlal), a businessman, is all set to be attacked by his enemies but his son Tej (Samajarjit Lankesh) teaches them a lesson. Tej happens to meet Damini (Nayan Sarika). You have to watch the movie to know what happens to Adideva Varma and Tej.

Mohanlal is at his best. His dialogue delivery and gestures are good. Samarjit Lankesh has done an excellent job in action scenes. Ragini Dwivedi has acted well. She proves that she too can act in action sequences. Garuda Ram is convincing as a vicious villain.

This film can be a one-time watch.

—Y Maheswara Reddy

SEASON OF CHEER

How B-Town celebrated Christmas

Bollywood celebs celebrated Christmas with joy, cheer, and festive enthusiasm. And what is more, they shared their joy with fans on their social media handles.

Sonakshi Sinha took to her Instagram to drop images from her celebration. The actress can be seen posing with her husband, Zaheer Iqbal, beside a Christmas tree at her home. She captioned the post, "Wishing you a holly jolly Christmas." The couple was all smiles as they posed for the camera.

Soha Ali Khan shared a picture featuring Saif Ali Khan, Kareena Kapoor Khan, herself, and the kids, Taimur Ali Khan, Jehangir Ali Khan, and Inaaya Naumi Kemmu, posing beside a Christmas tree and flashing their happy smiles. The actress hid the faces of the kids by adding hearts on them. She captioned the post, "And Christmas week has officially begun."

Tamannaah Bhatia posted pretty pictures of herself donning an all-red nightset and posing with a small decorated Christmas tree. She opted for a low makeup look as she posed for the camera. She captioned the post, "Ho Ho Ho Merry Christmas."

Diana Penty shared glimpses of how she celebrated Christmas 2025 at her home. Donning a black off-shoulder bodycon ensemble, the actress posed with friends and the lit-up tree at her residence. She captioned it, "Christmas at home."

Shilpa Shetty celebrated Xmas with her family. She took her kids outside for an outing along with her husband, Raj Kundra. They all posed together for pictures and had plum cake.

Khushi Kapoor shared a post from her celebration with her friends and rumored boyfriend, Vedang Raina. The young starlet and her pals were in red outfits for the celebration. The images also featured Orry.

—ETimes

Danger lurks behind seemingly harmless balloon fun

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

density than atmospheric air, which allows the balloon to float upwards when filled. This visual effect is what makes nitrogen balloons attractive at parties, photo zones and school events. Children love anything that defies gravity.

A balloon that floats without support creates excitement and curiosity, making it more appealing than regular air-filled balloons," said Dr Viyaendra R, a physicist.

Event organisers say helium balloons are often chosen because they give a clean, smoke-free floating effect and are cheaper than helium. They are also easily available through portable gas cylinders, which are frequently handled by untrained vendors. However, experts caution that helium is an asphyxiant gas. While it is non-flammable, it can displace oxygen in the surrounding air. In confined or crowded spaces, a sudden release of helium can reduce oxygen levels rapidly, leading to dizziness, breathing difficulty and even loss of consciousness.

"The biggest misconception is that helium is harmless because it does not burn," said fire safety consultant Mahesh Kumar. "The danger lies in oxygen displacement. Children are particularly vulnerable because they may burst balloons close to their face or inhale the released gas." Medical experts warn that in poorly ventilated halls, sudden exposure can be life-threatening. "Low oxygen levels can cause fainting within seconds. In a panic situation, this can lead to stampedes or secondary injuries," said a senior emergency physician from a city hospital.

Experts are calling for strict monitoring of gas balloon use at public and private events. They recommend banning gas-filled balloons at children's parties, ensuring proper ventilation at venues, and allowing only trained personnel to handle gas cylinders.

Parents are urged to choose safer décor alternatives. "Celebrations should create memories, not medical emergencies. The growing use of nitrogen balloons highlights the need for awareness, regulation and responsibility before another celebration turns into a preventable tragedy.," said a Bengaluru-based paediatrician.

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DUBAI 5 DAYS JAN: 15 FEB: 10
SINGAPORE MALAYSIA/THAILAND* 7/11* DAYS JAN: 13 FEB: 4, 19
BANGKOK PATTAYA 5 DAYS JAN: 20 FEB: 11, 26
BHUTAN 8 DAYS FEB: 24 / NEPAL & MUKTINATH 8 DAYS MAR: 10
SRI LANKA 7 DAYS JAN: 19 FEB: 2, 16
HONG KONG MACAU SHENZHEN 7 DAYS FEB: 10 MAR: 15
CHINA (SHANGHAI BEIJING XI'AN) 9 DAYS MAR: 23, APR: 10
ANDAMAN 6 DAYS JAN: 27 FEB: 16 MAR: 2

personal

CHANGE OF NAME

I Aarav Abhinav S/O, Priyadarshana Kasiraju R/o #b03, Chitrakut Basil Apts, 6th Crs Extn, Mahayogi Vemana Road, Kaggadasapura, C V Raman Nagar Post, Bangalore 560093 have changed my name to Aarav Abhinav Kasiraju.

I, Sudarshana Patel Thimmannabhatta, R/at. No.B-105, 1st Floor, Bollineni Astra Apartment, Prakruthi Nagar, Kogilu, Yelahanka, B'lore - 64. have changed To Sudharshana Patel Thimmanna Bhatta, Vide Affidavit Dtd.26.12.2025 sworn before Notary-Devaraja E

I, PRANAV G S, residing at No. H-45/3, 3rd Floor, 2nd Main road, Nagappa Block, 6th Cross Lakshminarayanapuram, Bengaluru- 560021, have changed my name to PRANAV GOVINDALA SHIVARAM, vide affidavit dated: 26.12.2025 Notary Devaraja .E, Bengaluru.

I, Saira Banu D/o Yousuf Khan R/o No 91 4th Cross 4th Main Vasanthappa Block Ganga - nagar RT Nagar B'lore 560032 have changed my name to Saheera Banu for all purposes.

I, Shivani Krishna Vankadari, D/o V A Radhakrishna, 29 years, R/o #44, Patel layout, Begur Main Road, Begur, Bengaluru- 560068, have changed my name to Shivani Vankadari forever vide affidavit dated 24.12.25.

I, Gyanu Kumar Jain, R/at. No.26, 7th Main, 3rd Cross, Ayyappa Swamy Temple Road, Subbanna Garden, B'lore - 40. have changed To Gyanu Kumar Nahata,Vide Affidavit Dtd. 26.12.2025 sworn before Notary-Devaraja E

CHANDRAPPA, S/o. Erappa alias Eranna, residing at No. 17, Magadi Main road, Gollarahatti, Bengaluru Uttara Taluk, Vishwaneedam Post, Bengaluru-560091, I here by declare that my father correct name is 'ERANNA' only, vide affidavit dt: 22.12.2025 before notary Devaraja E, Bengaluru.

I, LALITHA M K, W/o Late. Nagesh Kumar, R/at No. 220, 1st D Main, Shivanagar, Rajaji nagar, Bengaluru-560010, having aadhaar number 826428 650003 here by declare that LALITHA M K and LALITHA NAGESH KUMAR, both the names belongs to me only, vide affidavit dt: 23.12.2025 before notary Vanajakshi .R, B.lore.

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HEALTH TIP: Use fermented rice water to strengthen hair, boost elasticity, repair damage, and enhance natural shine

Take honey daily to naturally soothe, relieve irritation, and help control persistent dry cough symptoms

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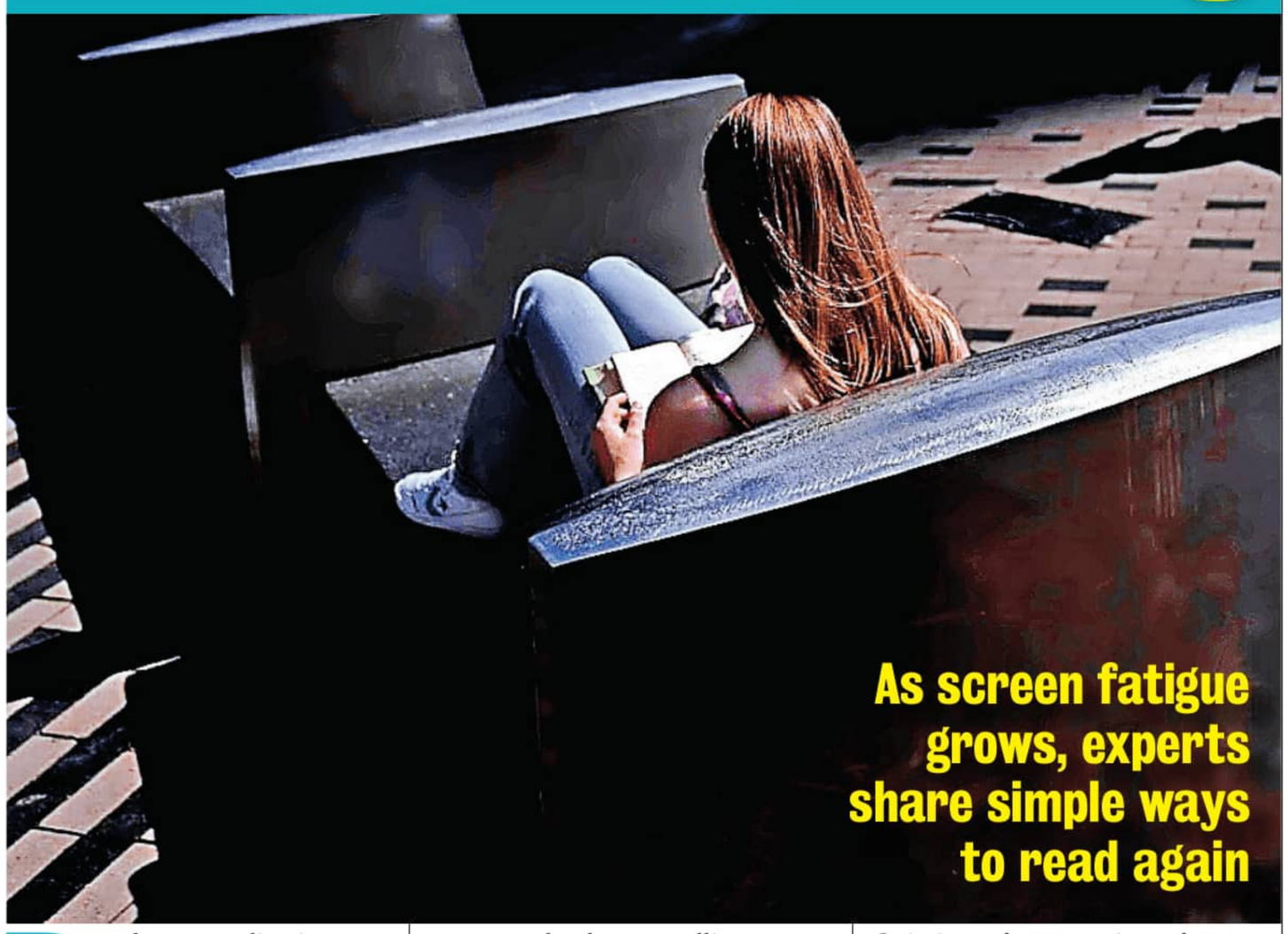
How to rediscover the love of reading



As screen fatigue grows, experts share simple ways to read again

People stop reading in adulthood for lots of reasons. But it's never too late to turn the page on old habits and start again. Curling up with a good book can reduce stress, increase creativity and boost empathy.

A recent analysis of U S government data found that the percentage of Americans who read for pleasure during an average day has fallen to 16% in 2023 from 28% in 2004. That includes not just books but audiobooks, e-books and periodicals like magazines.

Some people say they're fatigued from years of assigned reading in school. Others don't have the time or would rather zone out by doom-scrolling on social media. And many just got out of the habit.

"It's difficult for people who are really tired and busy to think about getting into reading if it's not something they're used to," said Jacqueline Rammer, director of the Menomonee Falls Public Library in Wisconsin.

For those looking to set reading goals or resolutions in 2026, here's how to get back into the habit.

Choose the right book

When picking your next book, avoid dense nonfiction or a 500-page doorstop. "Your first book should be something that you think will be joyful," said Jocelyn Luizzi, a software engineer from Chicago who blogs about books.

Everyone's taste is different, so get recommendations from a variety of places, including friends, booksellers and online communities like BookTok. Rammer and her staff ask library visitors: What was the last book, TV show or movie that you really enjoyed? Then, they look for similar genres or themes.

Many libraries offer access to a service called NoveList, which suggests "read-alikes" for various books and authors.

Set a reading routine

To create a habit that sticks, "start by scheduling reading into your day," said Gloria Mark, an attention span expert with the University of California, Irvine. Read five pages during a lunch break or right before bed.

If you're reading a physical book, Mark said to avoid distractions by keeping phones and laptops out of sight. But experimenting with other formats can make reading more convenient. E-books are portable, and audiobooks are a good candidate to accompany chores or the morning commute.

You can likely access both for free by downloading an app called Libby and signing in with a library card.

Try to read in a quiet setting, but don't be afraid to make it a social activity. Many cities in the U S and around the world host silent book clubs where people read their own books together in coffee shops and libraries.

Setting a reading goal for the year or joining a local library's winter reading challenge can help with motivation — but if it feels like added pressure, don't do it.

Shannon Whitehead Smith, a book blogger from the Atlanta area who also works in marketing, says scrolling through lists of other people's reads on social media and trackers like StoryGraph encourages her to keep the habit.

"Seeing all these other people reading motivates me to put my phone down and pick up this book that's sitting beside me," she said.

Feel free to skip a read

If a book feels particularly sluggish, it's ok to put it down and start another. Reading "shouldn't feel like a burden," said Jess Bone with University College London, who analysed the survey data about American adults reading for pleasure.

Routine readers say the habit helps them stay curious and release the stress of the day. Rammer, the library director, reads mysteries rife with twists and turns, and romances that cycle through roller coasters of emotions. Most of all, she likes books that end with a "happily ever after."

"I think the guarantee of knowing that things are going to end up OK is really reassuring," Rammer said. —AP

MIRRORLIGHTS

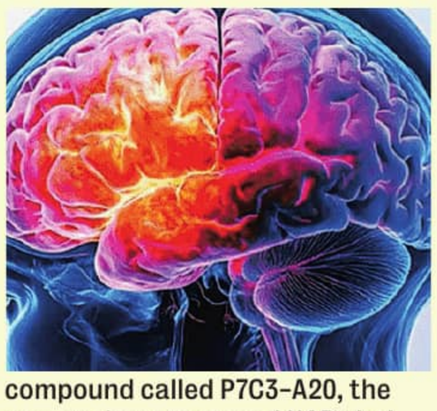
Animal studies suggest Alzheimer's disease may be reversible, challenging beliefs

In a development that could reshape the understanding of Alzheimer's disease, researchers in the United States have shown in animal studies that the neurodegenerative condition may be reversible—challenging a century-old belief that it is irreversible.

The study, published in Cell Reports Medicine, draws on evidence from multiple preclinical mouse models and analyses of human Alzheimer's brain tissue. It identifies disruption in levels of NAD+—a molecule central to cellular energy production—as a key driver of the disease. The researchers found that maintaining or restoring proper NAD+ balance not only prevented Alzheimer's from developing in mice but also reversed disease pathology and cognitive decline in animals with advanced symptoms.

NAD+ levels were shown to decline sharply in the brains of people with Alzheimer's, a pattern mirrored in mouse models of the disease. To test whether correcting this imbalance could alter disease progression, the team studied two genetically distinct mouse models: one carrying human mutations linked to amyloid processing and another with a mutation affecting the tau protein.

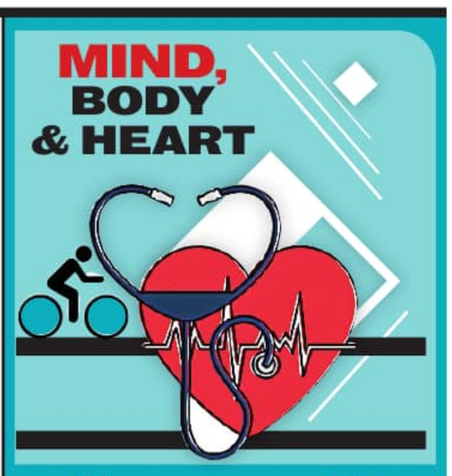
Using a pharmacological



compound called P7C3-A20, the researchers restored NAD+ balance in the brain. When administered before disease onset, the treatment protected mice from developing Alzheimer's-related changes. More strikingly, when given after significant disease progression, it reversed major pathological features caused by the genetic mutations.

Both groups of treated mice showed a full recovery of cognitive function, suggesting that restoring brain energy balance can enable the brain to repair itself, even at advanced stages of disease.

The findings raise the possibility that targeting NAD+ metabolism could offer a new therapeutic pathway for Alzheimer's. While the results are limited to animal studies, researchers say the consistency across different models strengthens the case for further investigation in human clinical trials. —IANS



All you need to know about...

Winter glow

Winter can be especially harsh on the skin, particularly for those with dry skin. Cold winds and low humidity strip away natural moisture, leaving the skin flaky, dull and prone to breakouts. The golden rule of winter skincare is hydration. The best part is that these ingredients are easily available in your kitchen and are budget-friendly.

Honey and Rosewater
This simple pack soothes and repairs winter-stressed skin. Honey's antibacterial and antioxidant properties help calm acne and dryness, while rosewater tones the skin. Mix one tablespoon each, apply evenly, leave for 10 minutes and rinse.

Coconut Milk
Coconut milk deeply nourishes the skin and adds a healthy glow. Grind grated coconut into a thick paste with water, apply on the face and neck, leave for 20 minutes and rinse with cold water.

Yoghurt and Turmeric
This classic combination reduces dryness, lightens acne scars and delays ageing. Mix yoghurt with a pinch of turmeric, apply, leave for 15 minutes, then wash off and moisturise. Use once or twice a week.

Banana Peel and Honey
Ideal for dry skin, this pack hydrates and helps fade blemishes. Mash banana peel with honey, apply for 10–15 minutes, then rinse.

Sandalwood and Rosewater
This calming pack brightens and moisturises skin. Mix into a paste, apply, let it dry and wash off.

Cocoa Butter and Olive Oil
Perfect for winter and ageing skin, this rich pack boosts radiance and reduces fine lines when used regularly.

—Femina

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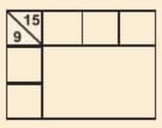

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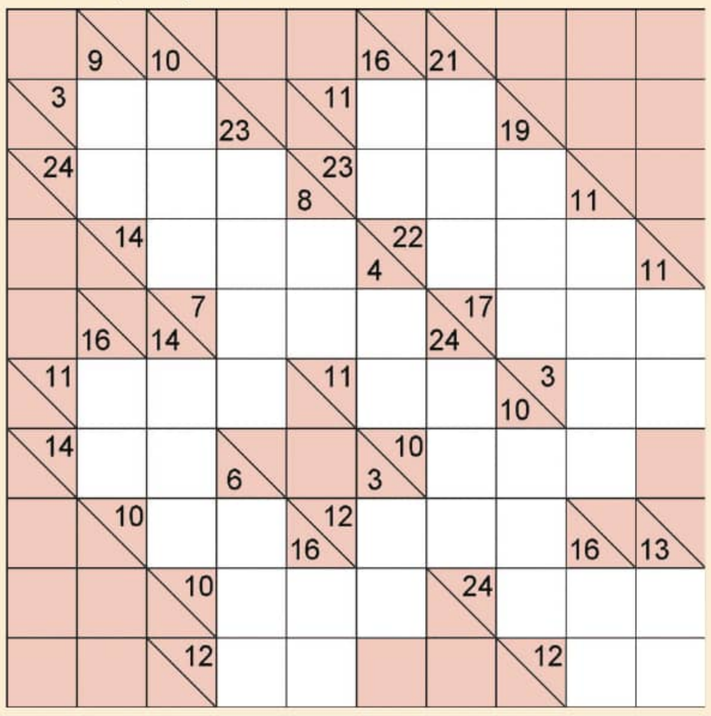
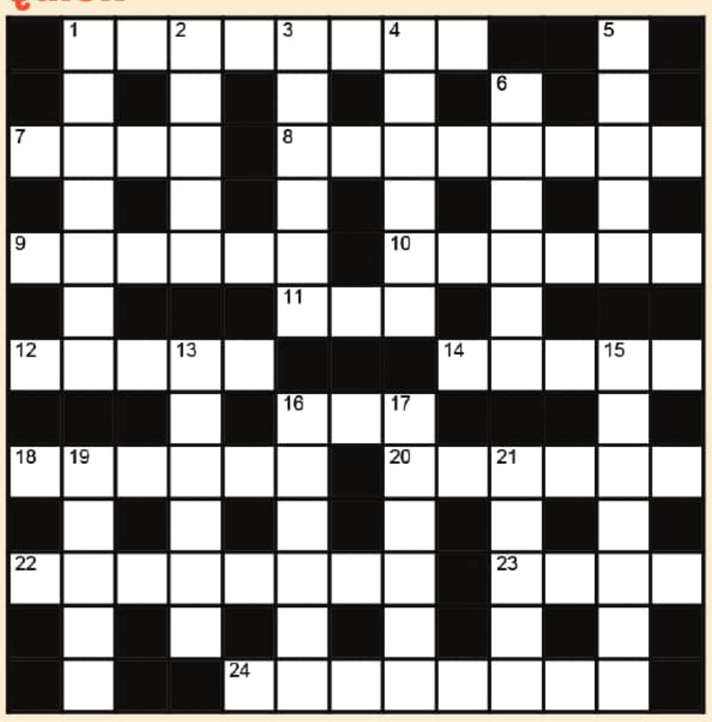


Quick



ACROSS

1 Grace and beauty (8)
7 __ __ true : a question of doubt ? (2,2)
8 Toughened (8)
9 Artillery weapon (6)
10 Laws; decrees (6)
11 Divine being (3)
12 Boxer ___ Fury (5)
14 Managed but not very successfully? (3,2)
16 Large sea fish (3)
18 Garden pavilion (6)
20 Antagonism (6)
22 Second largest ocean (8)
23 Dont pass (4)
24 Everlasting (8)

DOWN

1 Euphoria (7)
2 Pop star ___ John (5)
3 Hurting (6)
4 Sculpted or engraved (6)
5 Fragrance or attar (5)
6 North American country (6)
13 __ __ show : a solo effort ? (3-3)
15 Wagering or staking (7)
16 Common fabric (6)
17 Plateau in South Central India? (6)
19 Communion table (5)
21 Civilian clothes (5)

Quoteuncode

This puzzle is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that Q equals C, it will equal C throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Today's CLUE: Y EQUALS G

KQ HP KQKDJJN CBRPGWK-DBRUBY IDFPW QBP SPGN UBRCJYPBK.

Linemaro

Are you WiFi? Because I'm feeling a connection

Mind chow

Try not to become a man of success. Rather become a man of value

Joke of the day

There were two cannibals who captured a man. They decided it would be fair if they started eating from opposite ends. After a few minutes, the one who started at the head asked the other one, "How's it going down there?" And the other one replies, "I'm having a ball!"Ast

Loop

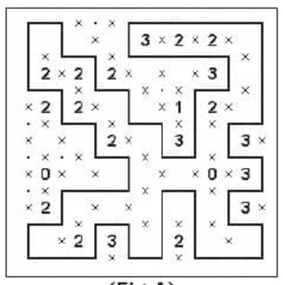
Rules

» Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A). » Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B). » Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines. » You can't draw lines around zeros. » Each puzzle has just one unique solution.

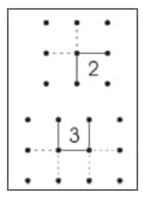
How to begin:

Example (Fig A) – Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

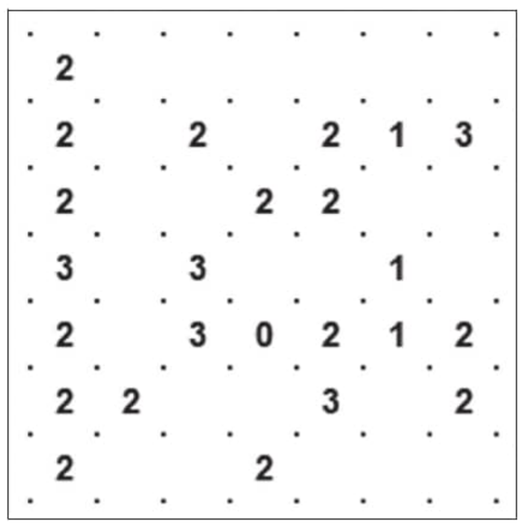
Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a dead-end (Fig B)



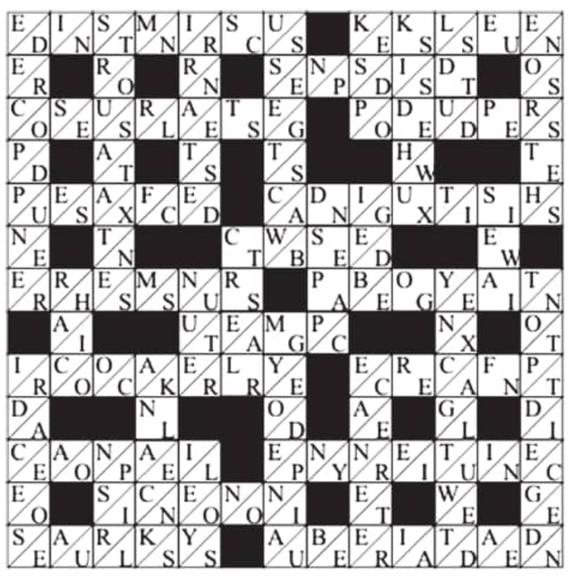
(Fig A)



(Fig B) Not Allowed



Strikeout



This crossword has no clues and the answer is there waiting for you. All you have to do is find it in each square. You have a choice of two letters, one of which you must strike out. If you choose correctly, you will be left with a grid that contains real words.

Fast five

How long do you think it will take you to unscramble the ten words shown below and fit them correctly into the grid in the order given one letter has already been entered to get you started? on your marks, get set...

1	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8	F			
9				

ACROSS

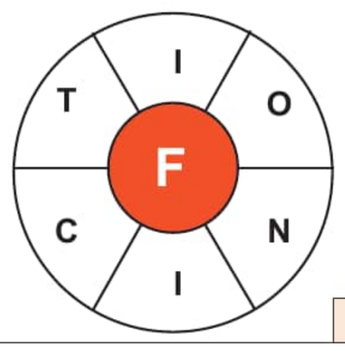
1 As CGS; 6 Rater; 7 Alice; 8 Lank F; 9 Of LSD

DOWN

1 Tiffs; 2 CE LOL; 3 A rale; 4 GD ran; 5 Casks

Mensapuzzle

Which letter replaces the blank and completes the sequence?



Bull's eye

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown? Every word must contain the central letter. There should be one seven-letter word. British English Dictionary is used as a reference.

01 Average; **02** Good; **03** Outstanding

SudokuChallenge

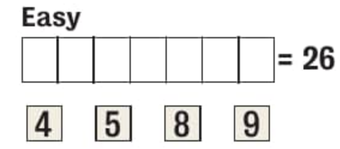
5			1					
		1	2	3	5			
		6	4					2
	9	4				6		8
	6			5			4	
1		2				9	3	
2					8	3		
			6	4	1	7		
					7			9

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from one to nine must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

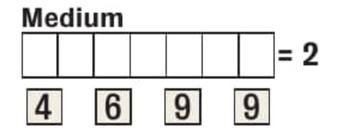
Gofigure

Place the four numbers in the first, third, fifth, and seventh boxes and whatever operators you care to use in the second, fourth, and sixth boxes in the correct order to get the answer. Use the numbers only once.

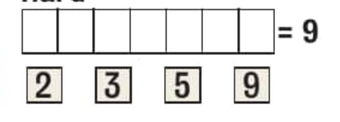
Easy



Medium

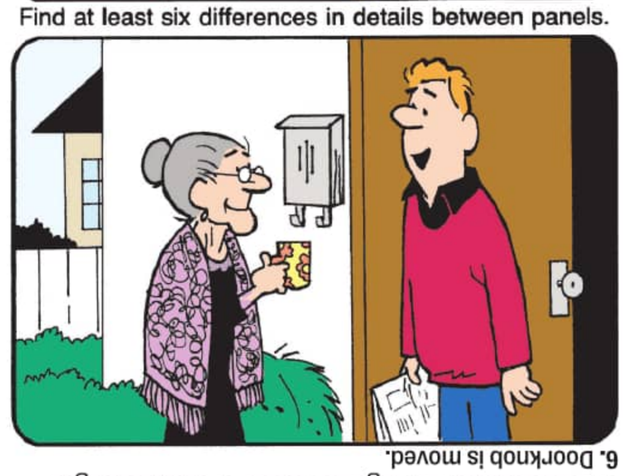


Hard



Hocusfocus

Find at least six differences in details between panels.



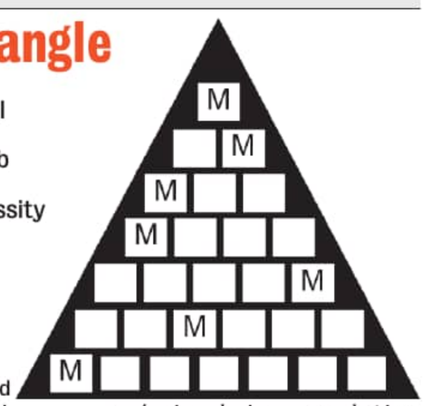
Differences: 1. Cup is larger. 2. Mailbox is larger. 3. Bun is smaller. 4. Finger is moved. 5. Shawl is longer. 6. Doorknob is moved.

Riddler

Which is the odd one out? Boundaries, Cancerous, Librarian. Scorpions, Chameleon & Keyboards

Alpha triangle

1 One thousand
2 I think therefore I
3 PC alternative
4 Medieval war club
5 Type of cheese
6 Shutterbug necessity
7 Gruesome



Beginning at the top move towards the bottom seven-letter word by adding a letter at each step and rearranging. A correct and different word must be made at each step answering to the clue given.

DIFFICULT TO SOLVE? FIND THESE SOLUTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE »

COMICS

Popeye

WHA'SA BIG IDEA GIVIN' ME THE BRUSH?
WHEN I GET MARRIED I WILL BE A ROYAL QUEEN!
I HAVE TO PRACTICE NOW TO BE THE WIFE OF A KING!
-AND YOU'D BETTER START PRACTICING TO BE A PEASANT!
I MIGHT HAVE YOUR HEAD IF YOU DON'T!
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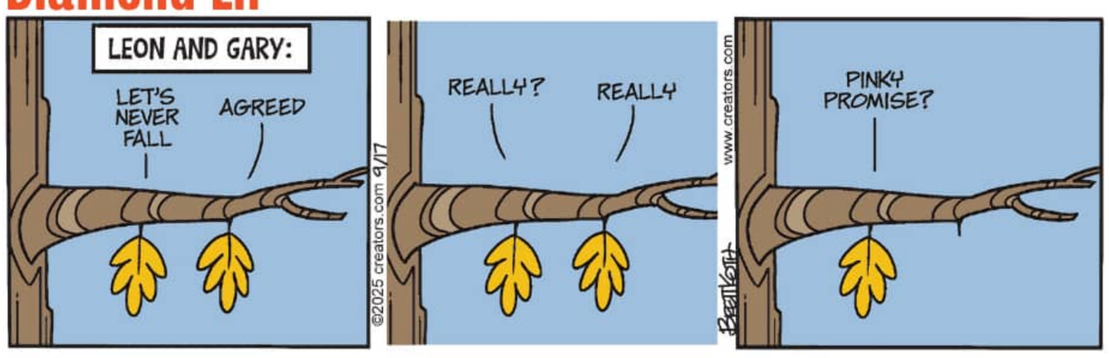
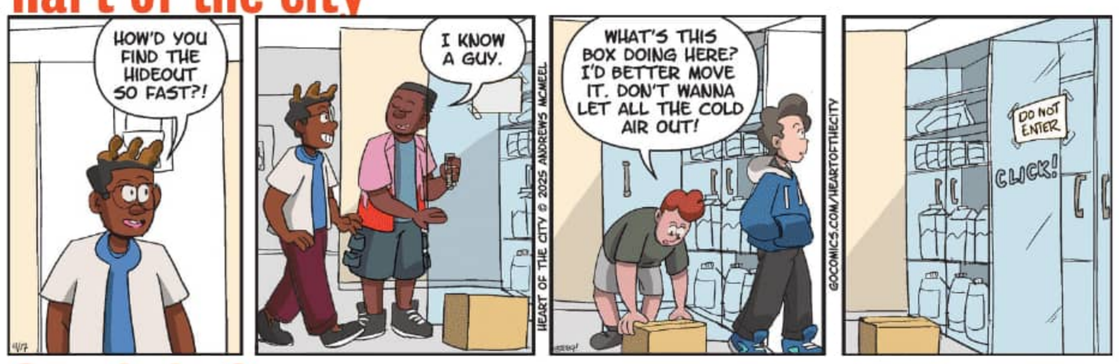
popeye.com
3-28
BUD SAHLENDORF

Bizarrotrip

Diamond Lil



Hart of the city


HOW'D YOU FIND THE HIDEOUT SO FAST?!
I KNOW A GUY.
WHAT'S THIS BOX DOING HERE? I'D BETTER MOVE IT. DON'T WANNA LET ALL THE COLD AIR OUT!
DO NOT ENTER
CLICK!
HEART OF THE CITY © 2025 ANDREWS MCMEEL
@OCOMICS.COM/HEARTOFTHECITY

Crankshaft

I WOULDN'T DISMISS JOINING THE CHOIR OUT OF HAND, ED... THINK IT OVER...
AND I MIGHT ADD THAT THE CHURCH ALWAYS PROVIDES DONUTS FOR THE CHOIR.
WAIT! I'VE THOUGHT IT OVER!
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9-17

Mutts

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

DR SUNDEEP KOCHAR

If it's your birthday today

An unexpected challenge to your current methodology may arise. Instead of resisting change, analyse it critically. Can this new tool or approach make your established process more ecient? Your success lies in adapting your proven structures, not abandoning them. Embrace this opportunity for strategic evolution; it strengthens your ultimate structure.

Aries Mar 21–Apr 20
Social gatherings bring joy, gather friends and family to celebrate. Your social magnetism attracts new acquaintances and strengthens bonds. Enjoy a carefree day of fun, laughter, and spontaneous connections.

Taurus Apr 21–May 20
A golden opportunity appears at work, prove your skills through steady effort. Completing the task with excellence could lead to promotion. Seize this moment to demonstrate competence.

Gemini May 21–Jun 21
Take a day off to recharge and prioritise self-care. Stepping away from routine restores creativity and energy. Enjoy personal time, relax fully, and return to work refreshed with renewed focus and motivation.

Cancer Jun 22–July 23
Choose friends who value and respect you, release relationships that drain. Let go of those not meeting your standards and invest energy in supportive, appreciative connections that uplift and cherish your true self genuinely.

Leo Jul 24 – Aug 23
A colleague's romantic interest may surprise you, embrace the possibility. Mixing work and pleasure pays off today; follow your instincts if mutual attraction feels right.

Virgo Aug 24–Sep 23
Stand firm when given tasks you dislike; assert preferences respectfully. Decline assignments that misalign with values or bandwidth. Honouring your boundaries preserves energy and prevents resentment.

Libra Sep 24–Oct 22
Move slowly in matters of the heart, don't rush into new attractions. A disagreement may disrupt your peace; take time before deciding. Cautious, steady steps near feelings prevent disappointment and foster lasting connections.

Scorpio Oct 23–Nov 22
Stop waiting for love, create opportunities by speaking your feelings honestly. Charisma attracts attention now; express desires clearly to draw those you seek. Take initiative and craft the romantic future you want to experience.

Sagittarius Nov 23–Dec 22
Overwhelm signals stress. Share tasks and delegate where possible. You're overburdened; lighten the load to restore balance. Rest, seek support, and redistribute responsibilities to protect health.

Capricorn Dec 23–Jan 20
Avoid overcommitting; choose only responsibilities you have time and energy for. Saying no protects your wellbeing and ensures quality in what you do. Prioritise essential tasks and conserve resources for meaningful pursuits.

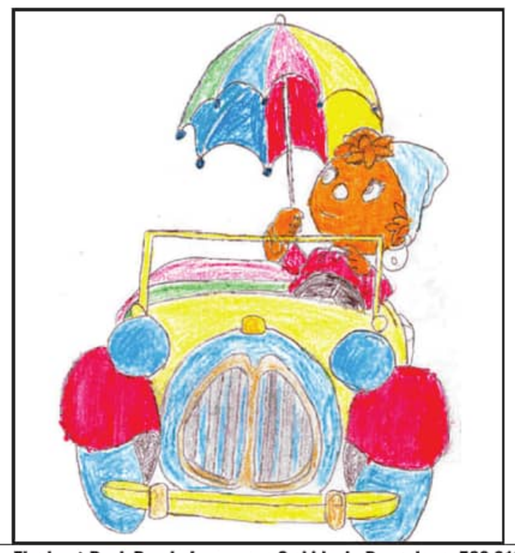
Aquarius Jan 21–Feb 19
Fortunate professional development arises, expect a long-awaited opportunity. Maintain hope and stay persistent; momentum shifts favourably. Trust timing as positive career changes manifest through patience and continued dedication today.

Pisces Feb 20–Mar 20
Attraction feels intense but may be a passing crush, don't rush serious steps. Enjoy lighthearted flirtation while staying realistic about emotional depth. Patience prevents misunderstandings.

www.sundeepkochar.com

KIDZONE

Angelina
Bengaluru



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-25x=850+25
-25x=875
X=875/-25

BULL'S EYE
coif, FICTION, font

STRIKE OUT

D	I	S	M	I	S	S		E	S	S	E	N		
R		O		R		E	N	D	I	T		O		
O	S	U	L	A	T	E		O	D	D	E	R		
P		T		T		S		H				T		
P	E	A	C	E		A	N	G	U	I	S	H		
E		N			T	W	E	E				E		
R	H	E	S	U	S		A	E	G	E	A	N		
	A		T	A	M	P			X			O		
R	O	C	K	E	R	Y		C	R	A	F	T		
A		N		O		A		L				I		
C	A	N	A	L		P	Y	R	E	T	I	C		
E		I	C	E	N	I		E		E		E		
S	U	L	K	Y		A	B	R	A	D	E	D		

QUICK

												R		
						U	N	E	N	D	I	N	G	
					O			A		T		N		
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G	A	Z	E	B	O		E	N	M	I	T	Y		
		N			C	O	D					E		
T	Y	S	O	N				G	O	O	T	B	Y	
S					G	O	D			C				
C	A	N	O	N		E	D	I	C	T	S			
T		O		I		V		X		N				
I	S	I	T		H	A	R	D	E	N	E	D		
C		L		C		A		M			C			
E	L	E	G	A	N	C	E				S			

FAST FIVE

S	C	A	G	S
T	E	R	R	A
I	L	E	A	C
F	L	A	N	K
F	O	L	D	S

QUOTE UNCODE
To be totally understanding makes one very indulgent.

RIDDLER
Keyboards. All the other words contain names from the 12 signs of the zodiac: bound-Aries, Cancer-ous, Libra-rian, Scorpio-ns, chame-Leo-n

MENSA PUZZLE
2. Starting from G and moving clockwise letters advance alternately 5 and 4 places.

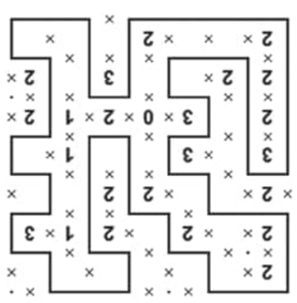
SUDOKU

6	4	5	3	2	7	1	8	9
9	8	3	6	4	1	7	2	5
2	1	7	5	9	8	3	6	4
1	5	2	8	6	4	9	3	7
7	6	8	9	5	3	2	4	1
3	9	4	7	1	2	6	5	8
8	3	6	4	7	9	5	1	2
4	7	1	2	3	5	8	9	6
5	2	9	1	8	6	4	7	3

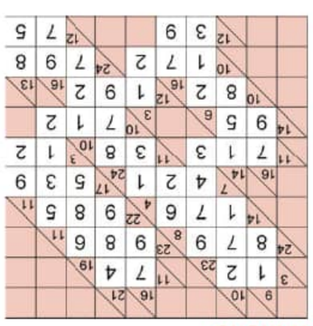
ALPHA TRIANGLE
M, Am, Mac, Mace, Cream, Camera, Macabre.

GO FIGURE
Easy
9 + 8 + 4 + 5 = 26
Medium
9 + 6 - 9 - 4 = 2
Hard
3 + 9 - 5 + 2 = 9

LOOP



KAKURO



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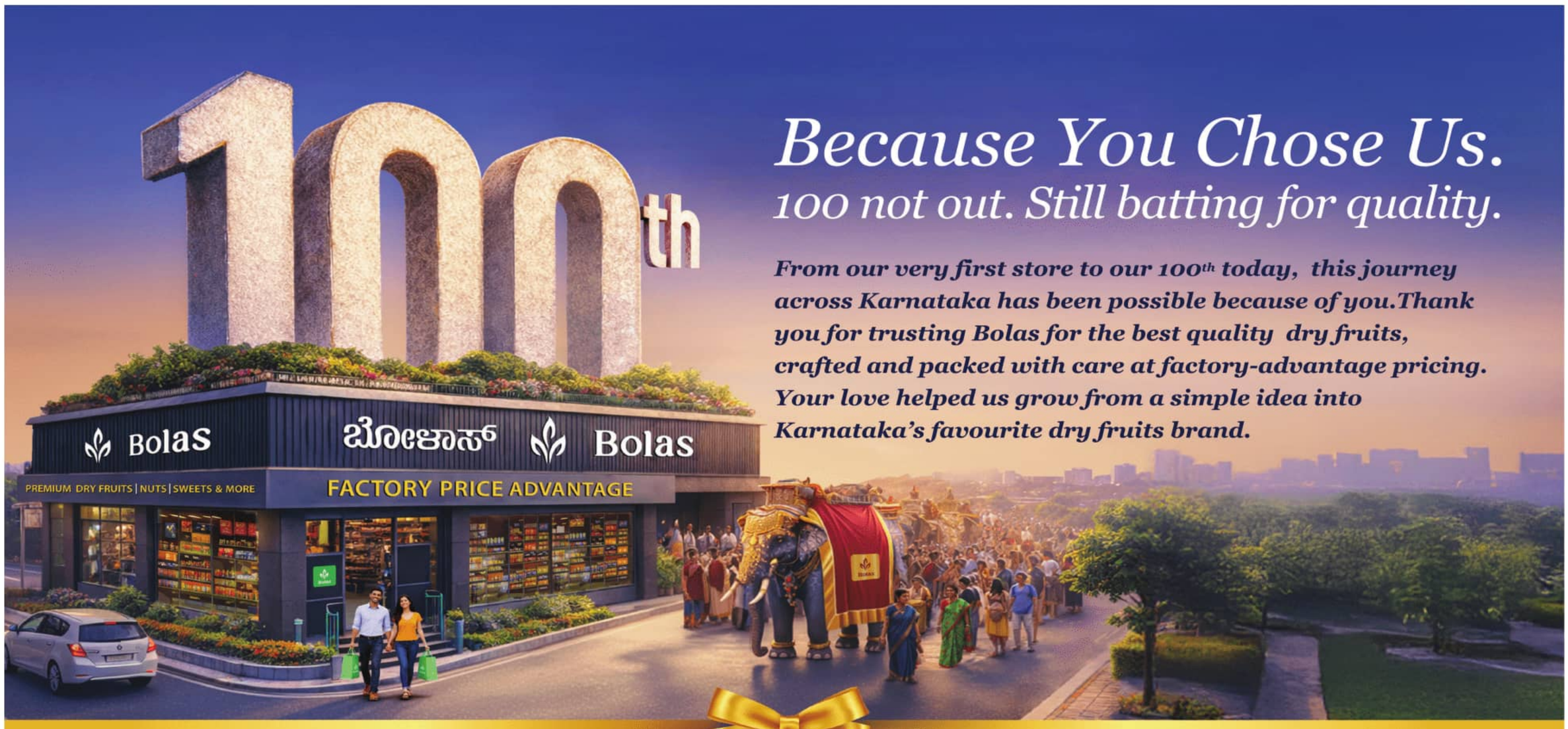

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Roasted Seeds Mix
30g | MRP ₹33/-

Roasted Makhana Peri Peri
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